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Editorial Double Special Issue: Academics and Activists: Advocating for Equity, Justice, and Action

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This Double Special Issue was envisioned as an international collaborative endeavor between colleagues located at educational institutions in both Canada and the United States. The White Privilege Symposium Canada (WPSC) event, an initiative of the Anti-Racism Task Force held at Brock University from September 30 – October 1, 2016, set the stage for the inception of this collaboration. With the focus on knowledge mobilization and dissemination of social action research and activism, a call for papers in the Canadian-based *Brock Education: A Journal of Educational Research and Practice* and the U.S.-based *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege* (UDP) journals sought to disseminate the work of racial justice scholars, activists, and artists who are interested in publishing their contributions. The two journals provide a platform for our mutual desire to exchange knowledge across Canadian and U.S. borders, specifically regarding strategies and action plans used by individuals and organizations striving to merge duality between environments—that is, the world of social activists and that of academics. These works provide inroads into a critical understanding about White privilege as articulated through heterogeneous writings, reflections, workshops, and papers offered at WPSC.

Here, we briefly describe some of the highlights from the UDP journal but also wish to emphasize the range of additional dynamic pieces featured in the UDP Special Issue. Therefore, we invite the reader to review those additional works in detail in UDP itself. By way of example, Taylor Leal Gibson (2017) provided a traditional Hodensaunee Thanksgiving address and welcome at the WPSC’s opening ceremony. We later asked him to think about sharing his reflections on the theme of the symposium. So too, the keynotes from Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. (2017) and Debby Irving (2017) are published in UDP. While our focus was on the burgeoning knowledge exchange at WPSC 2016, we also were keenly interested in publishing the work of a wider and broader range of authors who have a vested interest in the theme, “Academics and Activists: Advocating for Equity, Justice, and Action.” As such, the Double Special Issue recognizes the connections among social justice advocate groups located in educational institutions across the spectrum from the K–12 school setting through to the postsecondary system. The reader is invited to review both journals for a richer understanding about the intersecting themes raised in both.

Brock Education: A Journal of Educational Research and Practice
<https://secure3.ed.brocku.ca/brocked/>

Understanding and Dismantling Privilege
<http://www.wpcjournal.com/>

Introduction: An Analysis of Articles and Key Concepts Featured in the Double Special Issue

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The first article of the Brock Education Journal's special issue is Spy Dénommmé-Welch and Jennifer Rowsell's (2017) "Epistemologies of Silence." They provide autoethnographic reflections on how silence manifests through myriad experiences borne of social relations and political realities. The reader learns about how two very separate cultural trajectories, one shaped by Anishinaabe ancestry (Spy) and the second by Irish-British-settler hidden memories (Jennifer), merge temporarily by way of methodologically interrogating epistemologies of silence, although manifested in disparately distinct senses. As Dénommmé-Welch explains,

my work is a culmination of life experience and artistic practice that builds on multiple art forms and epistemologies, which in part aims to disrupt colonial histories and hegemonic discourses, which are all too often prevalent in the Arts and systems of education. However, not only does this process conceivably present the space(s) to disrupt colonialism, but it also can become a mode used to re-examine the implications of silence and its part in suppressing Indigenous knowledges, histories, and expressions of autonomy. (p. 12)

While looking through the lenses of research conducted, Rowsell articulates the process of unearthing the silencing of Black youth in schools. The coauthors speak to the converges and overlaps from their respective research observations that illuminate how "Western culture has placed great emphasis on the notion of speech/voice, in quite literal and figurative ways, either by emphasizing or demarking separation between 'dominant' and 'minoritized' voices. This has directly and indirectly contributed to forms of oppression and the subjugation of Indigenous and racialized voices" (p. 13). The authors seek to expose

the knowledge gaps among its citizens, as well as the violent nature of colonialism wherein select Euro-colonial narratives and knowledge systems have prevailed and contributed to the mythology of today's Canada. Building on the notion of fragmentation, and the potentiality for disrupting mythology, together we weave vignettes—snippets and pieces of knowledge—to form a type of narrative of voiced silence, and examine how our combination of vignettes function as a kind of monograph to underscore notions of silence. (p. 14)

The coauthors proceed to offer up a set of methodological research processes for studying and probing silence. Their examination of silence in images lends a connection to Afua Cooper's study of the image of the burial record for Diana Bastian.

In "Deluded and Ruined": Diana Bastian—Enslaved African Canadian Teenager and White Male Privilege," Afua Cooper (2017) provides a historical analysis of "racial and sexual abuse on the Canadian frontier (p. 26)." Bastian's burial record disrupts the myth that Canada was a

safe haven for southern African American slaves seeking freedom through the Underground Railroad to Canada. As Cooper explains, “when we place Black women at the centre of Canada’s historical and colonial past, we come to a new understanding of the power and privilege White men possessed, and the catastrophic impact it had on Black women’s bodies” (p. 26). Cooper’s analysis of the document critiques the problem that though physically and sexually violated, Bastian’s aggressor did not face any retribution because notions of White privilege and White supremacy deemed Bastian as property of her capture. Cooper states, “Bastian was owned by Loyalist Abraham Cuyler and taken advantage of by George More, one of Cuyler’s friends and colleagues. These men were part of the colonial elite, and therefore in many respects can be described as founding fathers of an emerging Canadian nation” (p. 27).

Jhonel Morvan (2017), in *‘Making Visible and Acting on Issues of Racism and Racialization in School Mathematics,’* disrupts the racialized racist silences that allow student success in the discipline of mathematics to continue to be privileged and accessible to elite students in ways that reproduce the “White power structure” in society. What is of interest in Morvan’s article is the fact that his argument is supported by a Toronto District School Board report that points to the racial inequities regarding school success “that makes such connections clear” and “present as ethical dilemmas that people in all educational settings must deal with on a constant basis” (p. 37). Morvan insists on the importance of galvanizing stakeholders into action. For Morvan, we cannot purport to endorse equity without first acknowledging how inequities occur. Morvan’s article is twofold in its approach: He first highlights how math is racialized then urges stakeholders to go beyond the equity rhetoric by way of his call to action that involves an “ethic of care” and the “ethic of critique.”

The collection of three articles thus far are based in Canada. The next is U.S. based, while the last two are internationally based and adopt a global perspective. Mollie A. Gambone (2017) in “Teaching the Possible: Justice-Oriented Professional Development for Progressive Educators,” examines a forum for the professional development of 800 educators. Gambone’s study is timely in that it delves into the current issues confronting educational professional development organizations. Gambone analyzes the program offered, using qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis as a vehicle for examining questions regarding the organizations’ and participants’ willingness to engage with justice-oriented curriculum. She anchors the rationale for her examination in the following problematic: “providing justice-oriented professional development for progressive educators has historically been a site of tension” (p. 50). The forum under examination is the Progressive Education Network’s 2015 national conference. Gambone’s study is innovative in its use of thematic analysis of the workshop abstracts based on the extant literature. She articulates the urgency of this work as follows:

This study aims to understand how professional development is designed as a site for progressive educators to engage with justice-oriented curricula. Findings indicate that in order for students to be engaged, democratic citizens, they must work alongside role model educators (Giroux & McLaren, 1986) who listen to and honor the truth in perspectives different than their own (Ladson-Billings, 1995). (p. 54)

Gambone’s study is unique, in that it merges the discussion of the research literature on social justice oriented approaches with the work on progressive educators through both content analysis and discourse analysis. She arrives at three themes:

- (1) *Utilizing pedagogy*, which included teaching techniques for student engagement and learning objectives for the participants to be able to take an idea back to their own context;

- (2) *Reframing social issues*, which encouraged the participants to understand how social issues are commonly framed, then analyze how these issues could be experienced or perceived by others. These sessions highlighted the importance of perspective, historical significance, and societal or political structures that perpetuate inequality;
- (3) *Understanding diverse perspectives*, which delineated specific causes or groups of people for whom sessions aimed to raise awareness. The causes most commonly advocated for were: the environment, LGBT/gender/sexuality issues, disability, community issues, and issues of race and culture. (p. 60)

Gambone offers a research approach that can be used by other activist researchers interested in learning how organizations deliver on opportunities for professional learning among educators, particularly those focused on merging the divisiveness between progressive education on one end and social justice education on the other.

Barbara Rose (2017), in “Moving From Chasm to Convergence: Benefits and Barriers to Academic Activism for Social Justice and Equity,” queries “the difficult process of defining and balancing the worlds of academia and activism, as if each world is on a different side of a chasm that can’t be reached” (p. 68). Rose argues for the importance for standing with institutional change at the structural level. Using Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) methodology, she writes about the trajectory in her thinking toward becoming and living as an academic activist.

In a manner that is both transparent and authentic, Rose expresses both the challenges and affirmations she has witnessed and fought for in both her research endeavors and work toward institutional change. She asserts that view as follows: “I have been influenced by events in both my scholarly and personal lives that reflect points of chasm and convergence” (p. 70). Turning to the research literature, Rose provides examples of activist researchers who have articulated what it means to live in “outsiderhood” and experience the liminality within institutions because of their activism. Such examples used by Rose stem from cultural studies and scholars who have taken on a counternarrative within the discipline itself. The examples are many, including women’s studies and critical race theory. What is evident to Rose is

In addition to academic activists being in a place of liminality, it can be argued that the scholarship of academic activism is similarly situated, lacking theoretical constructs or methodologies that are widely used across disciplines. Although most disciplines have theoretical frameworks that are used by activists within their academic field, the dearth of interdisciplinary theory specific to academic activism isolates academic activists from each other and reduces opportunities to provide examination of collective context, themes, meaning, and strategies. (p. 69)

Rose argues for the uses of SPN across disciplines and points out that it has been utilized to write about the work of activist scholars who support social justice issues in their scholarship and work on the ground.

In “Feminist Scholar-Activism Goes Global: Experiences of ‘Sociologists for Women in Society’ at the UN,” Daniela Jauk argues for public sociology as a means to bridge the gap between “academy and activism.” In fact, she insists that Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) is an important case example of a bridge between the divide. Jauk’s work serves to unpack the history of SWS’s scholar-activism in and around the UN based on historic documents and publications. I then turn to the research site CSW and lay out themes that emerged from sub-sample of interviews with current or former SWS scholar-activists,

representing experiences and challenges of SWS members' engagement with UN policy development since the mid-nineties. I demonstrate that SWS does justice to its mission of serving as an activist organization through its work in the global arena. The activism of SWS-members increases visibility of feminist sociology, disrupts hegemonic discourse, and offers opportunities for concrete social change, particularly through linking activism, mentoring, and teaching. (p. 80)

Jauk discusses a subsample that includes 11 interviews with both former and present-day members of SWS as well as those who have been pivotal to SWS contributions at the United Nations. She clearly incorporates her "own white, western, working class, transnational feminist lens to examine the interview transcripts of feminist scholar-activists" and in so doing she "interrogates opportunities and limitations for feminist scholarship activism around the Commission on the Status of Women (p. 80).

We now turn to the pieces published in *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege* that are part of a Double Special Issue with Brock Education Journal. UDP begins with Taylor Gibson's (2017) opening address, in which he pays homage to his grandparents and the teachings he came to value as a young child. Gibson is an educator, and his Thanksgiving address educates the listening audience about ancestors' knowledge as pedagogy. Gibson is followed by a joint Keynote presented by Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. and Debby Irving (2017) that we are pleased to be able to share here. Moore introduces the White Privilege Conference WPC to a Canadian audience, and candidly discusses his motivations and goals for initiating the conference almost 20 years ago.

In his first publication to explicitly discuss the rationale behind the WPC, Moore shares insights from his own ongoing journey. He emphasizes the importance of starting with the self, and the impossibility of skipping the deep personal work that we each must do. He then moves from the self to systems. Confronting the common misunderstanding that examining White privilege is about making White people feel guilty, the shift to systems work is essential: "This is not about evil bad White people or blame and shame. I am saying evil bad White supremacy. ... Systems change people all the time. Time to think about changing the system" (Moore & Irving, 2017, p. 9).

Debby Irving expands upon Moore's analysis by demonstrating how the dynamics of White privilege and supremacy have played out throughout her own life as a White woman. She moves between both the personal and systemic levels, emphasizing the manner in which White supremacist institutional practices privilege individual White people, all the while making it seem normal.

What I couldn't see, what I hadn't been taught, was that there had been hundreds of years of policy in the United States that had restricted who could live where, who could be educated where, who could get money through the lending system and at what rate, who had access to all the food, who had access to transportation, who got Social Security benefits, who got land, who got access to the GI Bill, and so on. And that all of that had been an institutional and structural unrolling that diverted resources disproportionately to White people. And once I understood that ... I understood how being White had allowed me to develop a distorted world view. (pp. 11-12)

Hilary Brown and Dolana Mogadime (2017) met over a period of a year to discuss what it means to teach about social justice and diversity in teacher education programs. Their conversations were documented using a recording device and followed research processes that align with duoethnography. The two researchers ask critical questions about their positionality as White and as Black and the impact that had on the curriculum and on the teaching, and learning environment they provide for their teacher education students. The view was to invite their students into these similar critical conversations. Brown and Mogadime argue that if teacher education programs are vested with preparing teacher education students to embrace identities that affirm diversity, then the students will similarly need to undergo genuine critical conversations about race, gender, sexuality, and class. The researchers surmise that their role involves modeling and documenting how these conversations might take place through duoethnography.

The next article “First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Leads: Transforming Education by Sharing Our Praxis,” by Katherine Samuel (an author who felt compelled to use an anonymous name), provides an insider’s analysis of the dangers and opportunities inherent in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s new requirement that each school board hire a dedicated “First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Lead” (Leads are not required to be indigenous themselves). This decision is aligned with many individual schools’ efforts to teach about Canada’s colonial history, and to bring in the voices, stories, and perspectives of indigenous peoples. As one would expect, the author finds varying degrees of commitment and success. Too often, the anonymous author finds

educators teaching about “safe” concepts such as medicine wheels, regalia, and artwork, yet teachers become uncomfortable and even resistant to teaching about the violent nature of colonialism, such as land dispossession, racism, or governmental policies that continue to shape the lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. These latter topics have been identified as “dangerous” by educators, and teachers have the discretion and ability to omit these topics from their lessons. (p. 45)

The author is in a unique position to try to change this as part of a program to work with specific model schools to move past these and other obstacles. The author’s goal is

to establish the purpose and direction for Indigenous education for these model schools. This direction will involve guiding educators to think critically about the work that they are doing. ...While teaching about culture is an important part of the work ... I want them to consider how they are complicit in settler colonialism, and to alter their classrooms by teaching about Canada’s racist and colonial history. I want to teach them how to educate others about Indigenous sovereignty, treaties, the Indian Act, residential schools, acts of resistance, and more. (p. 47)

Next, Kyle Ashlee’s article “Utilizing Mindfulness and Contemplative Practices to Promote Racial Identity Development for White College Students” examines the potential usefulness of mindfulness practices in the classroom. Ashlee emphasizes specific beneficial effects on white college students’ racial identity development, and the potential to promote sustainable engagement and reduce harm to students of color in education settings dealing with diversity related issues:

Given the lack of experience that many white college students have with racial diversity, many are fearful of making mistakes in diversity education (Bedard, 2000; Kivel, 1996; Sleeter, 1992). This fear holds many white students back from authentically engaging in diversity education in the first place (DiAngelo, 2012). Using mindfulness, white college students can become more resilient and prepared for challenging interactions that may occur in diversity education. (p. 58)

The author provides some concrete examples educators and leaders can adopt in any setting.

The next contribution “What Can You Do When You Don’t “Fit the Mold”? Dismantling White Privilege Affecting Career Advancement in the Education System,” by another anonymous author, recounts one Chinese Canadian man’s experience working in the education system, and the constant micro aggressions and micro insults he suffers. At numerous points, he stops to consider what he is willing to sacrifice to succeed in a system designed to exclude people like him. We are privy to each decision along the way, and his growing commitment to not abandon his sense of self and culture. Each confrontation is placed within the context of the broader research on the topic. Weaving together personal narrative, research, and concrete strategies, the author shares this man’s strategies as well as his success in confronting an institution that is central to reproducing White privilege. Some of these challenges corroborate with Mogadime’s (2008) research, signaling that the issues raised by Anonymous have been enduring for racialized teachers.

Aron shares her very personal journey with readers. Episodes of her life show her transformation from a naïve white child educated in the South, to an adult who has gone back to fill in the gaps in her education. Her contribution reflects the critical questions she asked about incidents in her life. For example, she recounts her sense of Southern pride in receiving an award from the Daughters of the American Revolution in a hall that she later learns barred Marian Anderson from performing there because she was Black. Individuals on the path to examining their own White privilege must go back and examine their earliest assumptions about who they are, asking what stories were excluded, and who was excluded in the process of developing a self-affirming identity. On this path, she interrogates memories of friends and family, material culture, and the civil rights movement, juxtaposing the original affective experience with what she now knows. As Aron acknowledges, we are now fortunate to have many publications that explore the continuous personal transformations of White people examining their own White privilege, and while we may find similarities and patterns, each story is uniquely individual.

It is appropriate that we conclude this Special Double Issue with Maggie Kyle’s “Poetry Examining the Edges.” Kyle is a university undergraduate student. We have heard from a range of voices: multigenerational, from both Canada and the U.S., possessing various racial identities, and coming from different institutional contexts. Together, they provide varied insights into issues ranging from the personal to the institutional, as well as the ways these are intertwined. Kyle’s series of poems bridge all of these domains. She begins with “My Body Was not Built for an Institution” (p. 88) She contrasts her own embodiment—“my skin...my face...my sexuality...my bones” (p. 88)—with the organizations and institutions which would try to mold her into an entirely different form, a form that can be disciplined, drugged, colonized, governed, pacified, and folded up into a box. In the end, she will not be restrained or contained. She declares her defiance and resistance. Her other pieces examine the themes of genocide,

capitalism, democracy, and nature, using metaphors and memories as her creative tools. We witness that very little has changed as we hear echoes of the stories shared by Aron. Read in conjunction with each other, listening to a White elder and a Black youth, we gain even greater insights into the repetitive production of White privilege. The reader may be left feeling despair, yet Kyle concludes with a challenge and a call to action we can't turn away from.

Finally, it is important and striking to note that multiple contributors have chosen not to use their real names as authors for fear of possible retaliation or other negative consequences. For example, the author of ““What Can You Do When You Don't “Fit the Mold”? Dismantling White Privilege Affecting Career Advancement in the Education System”” explains that she has decided to

conceal her identity because she has been advised by her teacher's union that “your employer views you as the ‘public’ face of the organization, and it has been accepted in law that school boards are employers that have reputations to protect. If you are commenting in a public manner on an issue that could be viewed to negatively tarnish the reputation of the board there could be disciplinary action laid against you. (cover page)

This statement alone emphasizes the critical importance of the work in which all of these authors are engaged, as well as the necessity of online, open-access journals like these that are willing to take risks. In the end, it is up to you, our readers, to add your voices and your commitment to this movement for equity, justice, and action.

Disclaimer: The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition uses White/Black when referring to racial/ethnic groups. We use either Capital or low case according to author's preference.

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Epistemologies of Silence

Spy Dénommmé-Welch

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Abstract

This paper engages some of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of silence, and its implications for teaching and learning both within and beyond educational settings. In this exploration, the authors draw on self-reflexive observations, woven throughout the paper as a series of vignettes, to explore questions of silence and its impacts on their respective teaching, research, and professional practice. Similarly, the authors apply this approach while taking into consideration different expressions and meanings of silence and how this can offer new understanding of culture and identity, including social and political issues, through arts, performance, and arts-based research.

Keywords: silence; epistemology; autoethnography; reflexivity; praxis

Spy Dénommmé-Welch, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor, multi-disciplinary scholar, composer and writer, and Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Brock University. His research focuses on Indigenous topics in education, arts, and music. He is a recipient of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Insight Development Grant, and is currently investigating issues of Indigenous identity through visual culture and music. He has a list of composing/writing credits, including the Dora-nominated opera, *Giiwedin* (2010), *Sojourn* (2017), *Bottlenecked* (2017), *Spin Doctors, for clarinet, violin and piano* (2015); *Victorian Secrets* (2015); *Bike Rage* (2013). He is a member of the Playwrights Guild of Canada and the Canadian Music Centre.

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Jennifer Rowsell, Ph.D., is Professor and Canada Research Chair at Brock University where she directs the Centre for Research in Multiliteracies. Her research interests include: applying multimodal, arts-based practices with youth across formal and informal contexts; documenting children's digital and media practices and epistemologies; and, longitudinal home ethnographies applying visual methods. She is co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies* with Kate Pahl, University of Sheffield. She is co-editor of the *Routledge Expanding Literacies in Education* series with Cynthia Lewis, University of Minnesota.

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“Speaking in and through stories then becomes a way to engage self-transformation, a kind of rite of passage.”

-Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Leaning Spirit*, 2013, p. 17

It is plausible that silence carries many implications for teaching and learning, within and beyond educational settings, while raising the following question: Who is or is not given the space or a platform to “speak,” and who is listening? Similarly, for those who may or may not choose to communicate through words, body language or other forms of expression, another question emerges: Are they still being heard? Invariably, the notion of silence is rather nuanced as it can serve or be used for political, social and cultural acts. Arguably, such acts of silence can potentially represent or enact forms of oppression or resistance. Therefore, how does the making of silence or the creation of sound perpetuate articulations of colonialism, and is it possible to subvert silence in a manner that it becomes a modality for resistance? Suffice it to say when considering these questions, it is crucial to understand what types of silence are being created, when and where, and what are the consequences or outcomes of these manifestations?

Silence or lack thereof does not necessarily imply that it will carry similar meanings across time and place, or situation even. Silence is forever subject to shift and change, regardless of context and circumstance. For instance, within the context of an artistic work and practice, the notion of silence could easily mean one thing to a composer or musician, while something entirely different to a playwright or performance artist. More specifically a combination of musical rests in a composer’s score would very likely have a different affect or meaning from that of an actor or storyteller’s use of dramatic pause in a play or reading. In turn this could have vastly different and varied affects upon an audience or group of listeners’ who are experiencing the work. Invariably, the implications of silence are also varied within the context of education and classrooms, where educators and learners may or may not easily navigate such pedagogical nuances.

In this paper, we engage in some of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of silence, by respectively drawing on observations we have made in our individual careers and recurrent strands in our writing both through our respective reflexivity and our research projects. While engaging in questions pertaining to the epistemology of silence we also recognize that our experiences as academics/educators are inherently different, given that we bring our own worldviews, life experiences, knowledges and practices into this discussion. Furthermore, while drawing on these diverse and interconnected discourses we also examine the interplay and role of silence in relation to teaching and learning using self-reflexive strategies. Building on self-reflexive praxis, we weave together our individual voices, understandings and observations about notions of silence throughout this paper as a series of vignettes. Our use of self-reflexivity takes into consideration the relation between self and culture, and draws on Margaret Kovach’s (2009) notion of autoethnography, which she states that “autoethnography, an approach with its foundations in ethnographical research, brings together the study of self (auto) in relation to culture (ethnography)” (p. 33). Through this form of narrative approach we attempt to tease out the broader questions and different meanings raised through the epistemologies of silence.

Reflective Silence

In this paper, we have come together to look at how silence can support or otherwise obstruct epistemological transformation in teaching and learning, within classrooms and real-world situations. To this effect we incorporate our own voices, as a means to position our respective identities and work as scholars. This enables us to speak to some of the nuances that are embedded within the themes of this paper, and to critically examine the interplay between dominant and marginalized narratives.

Spy:

I am an artist and an academic with Anishnaabe ancestry. I originally grew up in northeastern Ontario in the same region as some of my ancestors, and have always held a deep appreciation for the Arts. Increasingly, through my work I have encountered and witnessed moments in which aesthetic experience has presented new possibilities for decolonizing hegemonic discourses of knowledge and epistemology. Although I have trained and practiced in the Arts for several years now, I have progressively developed a self-reflexive practice built around the ontology of Indigenous knowledge, drawing on my years of work in multimedia, theatre, opera, and performance. In this manner, I have often found myself grappling with decolonization methodologies through performance (Dénommmé-Welch & Montero, 2014), aesthetics and expression. Similarly, what is often categorically described as forms of interdisciplinarity within some academic circles is in fact a process by which I have used to (re)examine ways of developing Indigenous autonomy and forms of reclamation through the intersections of art, Indigenous ontology and knowledge systems. Consequently, my work is a culmination of life experience and artistic practice that builds on multiple art forms and epistemologies, which in part aims to disrupt colonial histories and hegemonic discourses, which are all too often prevalent in the Arts and systems of education. However, not only does this process conceivably present the space(s) to disrupt colonialism, but it also can become a mode used to re-examine the implications of silence and its part in suppressing Indigenous knowledges, histories, and expressions of autonomy. Throughout this paper I hope to share some of these articulations, alongside my colleague, Jennifer Rowsell, and speak to the overlapping observations we have made about silence through our respective work, experience and histories. Finally, through my work I strive to investigate ways of (un)/(re)learning new forms of resistance, and to examine and understand the nuances of silence and its impact on different expressions of knowing and being.

Jennifer:

I am a white female Canadian professor, of third generation Scottish and British descent who comes from a long line of educators. I grew up in Toronto, in my Grandmother's house, and although I have very few memories of her, I do have a faint memory of a towering, intimidating figure who was a strong advocate for education. When I was five she passed away, nonetheless I continued to feel and sense her strong, silent presence in the house. This silence is all the more poignant now because our family home was demolished last year and a new, modern house constructed in its stead. These moments of silence might appear small and perhaps opaque to readers, but silence resonates in people's lives in subtle and varied ways – in spaces, in speech, in photographs, and in lived, felt

experiences and as such they are idiosyncratic and not necessarily in need of exposing vulnerabilities – silence shapes shifts around our identities. Silence has become a recurrent motif in my life because, like all of us, I carry with me silent stories and I am fascinated by the silent stories research participants have shared with me over the years. Silent stories are memories that play out during our everyday lives and that drive ways of thinking and being in the world.

I began my graduate work focusing on traces of identities, beliefs, values and epistemologies within literature and gradually moved into photographs, films and digital worlds. As a researcher, I frequently ask: Is there a story within this text? Are there traces of identities embedded in its materiality? What is the story of the text's production?

Keenly interested in how identity, culture, beliefs, and interests shape and influence meaning making, I take an ethnographic account of meaning making by documenting how subjectivities, contextual factors and social practices become embedded in texts. I examine objects and material worlds closely, as traces of identity. Silence plays a role in my work through the ways that I take account of what is absent, silenced, or lost over time and across spaces. To me, as MacNaughton (2005) notes, "If we know what has been lost from history, we can change how we see and understand our relationships with each other now" (p. 152). Locating what has been lost, silenced, hidden, or removed traces absences of the past in the present and helps to excavate silenced thoughts, beliefs and hopes. With Spy, we speak to the overlapping observations we have made about silence through our respective work, experience and histories.

Sharing our stories throws into relief some of our differences, yet we are both equally fascinated by the mercurial nature of silence. Silence can be positively and negatively construed. One can be silenced and rendered invisible. Or, one can be thoughtful and reflective in silence. Silence can be steeped in culture, social practices, and religion. In the following sections, we weave together theoretical questions and methodologies through a series of vignettes, used to underscore and frame the complexities and nuances of silence, which is particularly helpful in guiding our analysis of different epistemological meanings of silence.

Silence as a form of Violence, or How Violent is Silence?

Undoubtedly, Western North American culture has been preoccupied with its own language, political discourse, social norms and cultural values, despite it often being imposed upon others through forms of colonization. For instance, the impacts of silence were especially felt through the Indian residential school system, as thousands of Indigenous children, over generations, were stripped of their culture, and were forbidden to speak their native mother tongues. Consequently, generations of Indigenous people, families, and communities in Canada as well as in the United States suffered the isolation and near annihilation of their own languages through such racist forms of systemic silencing. As such, throughout its colonial history the voice of European settler society in North America has been vastly privileged and rewarded over those of Indigenous peoples and other minoritized peoples. Western culture has placed great emphasis on the notion of speech/voice, in quite literal and figurative ways, either by emphasizing or demarcating separation between "dominant" and "minoritized" voices. This has directly and indirectly contributed to forms of oppression and the subjugation of Indigenous and racialized voices,

resulting in the fragmentation of the ontologies of diverse knowledge systems. Such fragmentation can and does present challenges with accessing knowledge and better understanding of our collective histories within and beyond Canada. However, this exposes the knowledge gaps among its citizens, as well as the violent nature of colonialism wherein select Euro-colonial narratives and knowledge systems have prevailed and contributed to the mythology of today's Canada. Building on the notion of fragmentation, and the potentiality for disrupting mythology, together we weave vignettes – snippets and pieces of knowledge – to form a type of narrative of voiced silence, and examine how our combination of vignettes function as a kind of monograph to underscore notions of silence.

Studying Silence

Our approach to probing silence involved a series of meetings where we talked through our common and divergent thinking about silence and discussed possible approaches to writing on this topic, including the use of self-reflexivity. Then, we drew on our respective pedagogical approaches and research to analyze how silence circulates and meanders through our work as a strong, recurrent theme. Our writing therefore involved observational fieldwork, interview data with young people, and action research methods. To interpret and analyze silence as a theme and recurrent motif, we use constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) across various research studies. In the paper, there are excerpts of pedagogical moments and research studies that serve as vignettes of silence – telling instances of silence enacted or felt as a presence.

Silence in Research

Researchers sometimes hide in the shadows of their sites and ethnographic researchers, in particular, often hide in the shadows of contexts to document people, actions, movements, places and spaces, and the stuff or objects that represent the focus of research studies. Conducting research can be and so often is silent in nature with threads and connections coming together in fieldnotes as a mapping of moments. There have been many moments over the course of research studies when Jennifer sat in silence observing and documenting what she sees across different contexts, but equally, there have many research moments filled with interaction, collaboration and co-research with silence playing a role as she concentrated with children and young people to make things.

Fieldwork is not simply a transcription of actions, contexts, people, and artefacts, but it involves, quite centrally, a re-representation of and engagements with these events – a negotiation of meaning between what actually happens and observations in silence. There have been times when Jennifer has felt and acknowledged the silence of her role as a researcher. Although relationships have been forged and dialogues and sharing have taken place, there is scripting and rescripting of “the truth” that happens when anyone observes people living their lives. At times, Jennifer has felt uncomfortable about this silence, but much of the time there is a naturalness to the seeming silence of a researcher watching embodied actions and stories unfold that develops into a relational process. For Jennifer, there have been so many moments of connection and collaboration with co-researchers. When she felt outside of the research, there was an uncomfortableness to her silence in contexts and she felt more like a distant, almost omniscient observer. When she felt inside

of the research, any silence was shared by co-researchers. She is far more at ease with being in the web of activity and taking part in the research. This is where the “naturalness” comes from – a sense of being a part of the whole experience and immersed in the culture and context. It is documenting stories that enriches the silence and that mutually constitutes the research. In the next few sections Jennifer details varied perspectives on the topic of silence that she has experienced in her work.

Like Jennifer, Spy’s encounters and interactions with silence in research have been complex, which often raises philosophical questions. For instance, as an educator and scholar, Spy has often grappled with the implications of research, particularly being a person with Indigenous ancestry who is keenly aware of the historical paradigms and structures of power responsible for the displacement and subjugation of Indigenous peoples’ identity and culture and their relationship to their lands and histories. Such forms of oppression have indeed impacted the ways in which research has engaged with and silenced Indigenous peoples’ worldviews and knowledge systems. Linda Smith (1999) argues: “The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful” (p. 1). Undoubtedly, the idea that research “stirs up silence” is a powerful marker of just how delicate the line is when engaging with Indigenous communities that have historically been traumatized by the effects of colonization, imperialism, and various forms of unethical treatment.

For Spy, this raises many challenging questions, and like many other Indigenous scholars and artists has compelled him to problematize these spaces and parameters. Invariably, Spy’s research draws on the implications of silence as a means to interrogate the positionality and intersections of knowledge, while querying notions of privilege. As a scholar who often works with archival materials, using auto-ethnography and self-reflexive approaches, Spy has had to consider the ethical questions relating to his own interactions with research, taking into account the ways in which his own experience is affected by the materiality and ontological scope of knowledge. Consequently, he has had to examine his own perceptions, understandings, and interpretations of “silent” knowledge, in order to make meaning out of the narratives that emerge from archives and oppressed histories, waiting to be (re)told or (re)written. As such his understanding and encounters with notions of silence and performativity are evocative not only as an educator but also an artist. Understandably, one’s silent experiences of the world, or experiences of silence within it, occurs in varied and unique ways. So, arguably, the role and purpose of silence carries many implications for understanding and connecting with the surrounding environment.

For instance, one might silently encounter different learning styles through his/her own teaching experiences within various educational settings. More specifically, educators and artist practitioners have to often contend with the complexities of space and identity in his/her own practice, while questioning such things as: who gets to speak, when and where, and how precisely are such voicings taken up, or else silenced? Similarly, what occurs when attempting to break down and examine these parameters, say for instance when looking at the dynamics of a classroom and how some individuals feel more compelled or freer to speak than others, versus what happens in the moments where silence takes hold? Does someone’s silence necessarily suggest a form of shyness, or thoughtlessness, or

resistance? What manifests in the learning process when an entire group chooses not to speak, or when silence is imposed?

Silent Interests

The silence that Jennifer discusses in this vignette is a different kind of silence. The vignette features a student who is rendered silent at school, who is at times overlooked and who would prefer not to be silent. Some students want to be silent, perhaps even garner strength and power through silence. Such is not the case for the young man in this vignette.

As Director of a tutoring centre for three years, Jennifer has encountered many children and teenagers who struggle with literacy at school. More often than not these students have low grades in school literacy, but nevertheless they have rich and eclectic interests that are silenced if not absent at school. There is one young man who stands out for Jennifer because of the stark contrast between Cole (pseudonyms are used throughout) at school and Cole in the tutoring centre. David Kirkland (2013) talks about “an unknown story” that is rarely told about Black males and indeed Jennifer has noted a similar degree of silence around young men in middle and high school in terms of their ruling passions (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) and burning interests. By looking ethnographically at how young people engage in their everyday textual interactions it soon becomes clear that there are such rich, manifold literacy engagements that they have that are silenced in formal schooling. Composing music, designing architectural worlds in Minecraft (Rowsell & Simon, 2017), writing stories (Rowsell, 2014a), making films (Rowsell, 2014b), there are so many interests that are not present within more regulatory, formalized learning environments and their absence is thrown into relief when you see them come alive in other contexts. Cole is a poignant example because he has so many interests from science and technology, to gaming, to cadets and he exhibits such passion when he talks about them.

Over the course of doing research studies with Cole as a participant, Jennifer had many opportunities to speak with Cole’s Mum who gave us some wise advice about him, “find a subject that peaks his interest and he cooperates and will find different ways to seek out information.” After receiving this advice, we asked Cole about new things that he has learned and without fail, he would extemporize on his topic de jour. The whole research team worked with Cole and we all witnessed his love of information and curating facts. Cole is upfront and ebullient about his aptitude for information gathering and research skills:

I do research and projects on my iPad – anything that crosses my mind I research. For instance, today I looked up – what is energy? Everything is energy, but on the website that I was on, it said that energy is an object that is everything. The cosmos is another word for everything and the world. Our planet is an asteroid – everything has its own energy (personal communication, March 10th, 2015)

But, Cole’s account of school life does not align with the lively Cole we witnessed in the tutoring centre. Cole and his Mum talk about how he struggles with schoolwork and with formal learning. Cole feels marginalized at school and not often stimulated by school content and this is borne out in his grades. Cole predominantly associates disinterest, even failure with school. How might the story of Cole and formal schooling be different if his interests are louder, more present at school?

Silent Tensions

Tension as a form of silence can have a profound impact on a person's mental, physical, spiritual and emotional state. Patsy Rodenburg, who is a voice coach and theatre director, states: "Not all tension is useless; some tension is very useful. Without tension as part of the framework, as in, say, a suspension bridge or a skyscraper, our bodies would collapse into a heap on the floor" (1992, p. 120). Spy's observations of silent tension in teaching has often presented itself in a myriad of ways, and depending on the circumstance and context, can introduce new understandings of ourselves, our interactions with the world, our use of voice, and our interactions with silence. Rodenburg (1992) argues that "so much of the tension that blocks our voice is used unnecessarily. [...] Healthy and appropriate tension, like the fight and flight tension required to survive an event like shock, is necessary for survival" (p. 120).

Over the years, Spy's encounters of working in the theatre hall as an artist and the classroom as an educator have presented many moments of tension, necessary and unnecessary. Yet such moments, whether seemingly trivial or mundane, have often illustrated how tension can be the catalyst for unsuspecting change. For Spy, these moments of silent tensions have opened up new, and often more substantial moments for epistemological interventions through teaching and learning, through art making and production. Surprisingly or not, such moments have emerged in the most ordinary ways, such as through the simple listening or viewing a musical composition or a guided theatre warm-up exercise or a guiding seminar question. Invariably, these moments are intrinsically linked to an individual's learning process, or experience of the world, where deeper meanings are made in moments of silent self-reflection, or in the moments where we are either challenged by our own belief systems and worldviews, or by those of others' which confront our own boundaries of knowledge and experience.

Spy has witnessed many such moments, notably a seminar he led where learners invoked new or different ways of thinking, reflecting, and experiencing aesthetics and education. Spy introduced the group to John Cage's (1952) composition *4'33*, and the ensuing seminar activities opened up some interesting and fascinating responses from some who, accepting Spy's invitation to challenge or build on the themes of Cage's composition, led everyone through an engaging one-hour activity in silence. It was evident to Spy that many were first puzzled by this activity, and the tension was palpable. All participated in this collective moment of silence, which was only sporadically interrupted by the sound of chalk on a chalkboard or marker on paper. The seminar activity leaders would write instructions on the board, and as the group engaged in a sequence of reflective activities, the tension seemed to dissipate, and increasingly the entire class seemed to come to accept this new experience. The group adjusted or adapted to these new rules of silence (i.e., the primary rule imposed by the seminar leaders was that no one was allowed to speak during the exercise), and caused Spy to consider the implications or meaning of adapting to, accepting, or following directions through silence. Moreover, he was taken by how the initial tension that existed from being asked to stay silent, eventually faded when everyone was left to their own thoughts, possible daydreaming, or boredom, comfort or discomfort of sitting for an hour in silence. The rupturing effect of enacting silence steadily increased, until it was disrupted by an individual, seated at a piano who struck a key on the keyboard. While the note breaking silence was momentarily disruptive, it evoked another disruption,

a breaking of the universal rules, and a sense of the interplay of necessary and unnecessary tension. Ultimately, such actions illustrate the ongoing need to challenge the tension of silence and epistemology.

Silence in Movement

Susan Sontag (1969) claims that “the artist who creates silence or emptiness must produce something dialectical: a full void, an enriching emptiness, a resonating or eloquent silence” (p. 11). Over the course of her research examining representational dimensions of literacy, Jennifer has done movement work with elementary students (Rowsell & McQueen-Fuentes, 2017) and she has observed how movement offers a generative, fecund silence in line with Sontag’s enriching notion of silence. Watching children complete movement exercises and create tableaux offers a kind of powerful silence because bodies become channels of meaning (i.e. there is a complete absence of and role for language). As a part of a SSHRC-funded research project, Jennifer and Glenys McQueen-Fuentes completed movement exercises with grade 5 students as a part of their science unit. There was a specific day during the movement work that stands out:

We asked them, when you find your centre stay there – how do you feel when you do this?

A few students said ... “I feel weird” And Glenys asked ... Weird good or weird bad – “Weird Good!!” they said.

It is one of the only times that we used silence in our movement work and we had no idea that it would have such an impact.

(fieldnote, March 27, 2014)

For Jennifer, the day stood out because she devoted the afternoon to mindful meditation work. The one activity that students responded to most is called “centring.” In the photograph there is some sense of the calmness and equanimity that the exercise imbued in students.



Figure 1. Centring in silence.

Most of the movement work that was completed involved sound and gesture, but the silent work was enriching and eloquent. What was intriguing about the centring exercise was the insistence on silence, which took a few minutes to get used to, but once they were silent – they appeared to not want to come out of it. It is a literal sense of silence that stood out for Jennifer and Glenys.

Silence in Images

In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Barthes (1980) talks about photography as an “advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity” (p. 12). In her photographic work with youth, Jennifer and Peter Vietgen (Rowsell & Vietgen, 2017) ask young people to actively project their identities, interests, thoughts and beliefs in conceptual photographs. Such images demonstrate more of a photographic association with identity – the antithesis of Barthes’ conception of a photograph as a dissociation of consciousness. But, at the same time, Barthes talks about connecting with sensorial, phenomenological worlds and this resonates strongly with what Jennifer witnessed over the course of her photography projects with secondary school students. Barthes describes photography as a wound that “I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think” (p. 26). As teenagers involved in Jennifer and Peter’s research developed and storyboarded photographs, they spoke at length about emotions and making their photographs emotionally laden. There were many moments throughout Jennifer and Peter’s photography projects when she saw what Barthes calls *punctum* in photographs. Within the silence and shadows of many of the photographs that teenagers produced over the course of their six-week research study, there were wounds, pricks that pierced through photos. Thinking about silence in relation to conceptual photographs that secondary students shot, there were many photos that exploited the impact of muted lighting, soft colours, filter effects, artefacts and clothing to create silence in photos. They did this in order to display what Barthes calls *punctum* in photos. *Punctum* is a detail “i.e., a partial object” (p. 43). *Punctum* has the power of expansion. According to Barthes, *studium* is the impact of photo – what it says to the viewer, where *punctum* is the prick or pop in the photo. Barthes claims that the *studium* is coded, but the *punctum* is not coded – it is sudden, spontaneous and pricks out to the viewer (p. 47).

Secondary students involved in the photography project had their own way about moving from silence to *punctum* in photos that they produced, as became clear in the reflections of Heather:

.... like one main part that stands out amongst the rest of it like a photograph I took of a kitchen with a chair pulled out ... it was the pulled out chair that stood out. (personal communication, 2014).

This was also demonstrated in the comments of the photography teacher, Lesley: and she’s great at portraying textures and she would do these portraits of people, she did a whole series in a retirement home because she volunteered in a retirement home and she had a lot of people with ... great texture on their faces and she has an ability to focus on the texture of faces as a focal point where the eye goes (personal communication, 2014).

To illustrate the juxtaposition of silence in photographs next to a prick, or punctum to use Barthes' term of meaning and emotion, there are two photographs featured in Figures 2 and 3. Figure 2 is entitled *Madness* and there is punctum in the shadow of the head silhouetted on the dirty sheet with writing on it. As if there is another figure appearing behind the young woman, she sits catatonic with her gaze fixed on something in the distance. There is silence in the darkness surrounding the figure and then a burst of light filtered onto a gowned figure. The darker areas around the corners of the photograph represent more silent, quieter elements and the suffusion of light in the middle represents the prick of life and energy.

In Figure 3, the young woman who captured this image talked about taking hours to set up the shot perfectly. The sepia tone, the blood on the walls, the dimmed light serve as an ideal backdrop against the woman's piercing eyes and fixed gaze. Photographic elements sit in silence like the light in the back, but what pricks the viewer are the translucent eyes staring out at the viewer. There is tremendous, powerful movement in her stance. The punctum is in her eyes and in the fixed gaze. Punctum is most present in the hand with fingers gripping the carpet.



Figure 2. Silence and Punctum in Madness.



Figure 3. Silence and Punctum in Jade's Photograph.

Silence as Island

"An artist has to understand silence

An artist has to create a space for silence to enter his work

Silence is like an island in the middle of a turbulent ocean"

- Marina Abramovic, *Walk Through Wall*, 2016, p. 308

Arguably, silence plays a vital role in the life and work of some artists, as well as for some educators, which has been important to the intersectionalities of Spy's work. In this manner, Spy has found that the implications of silence can be multi-fold, all depending on the circumstances, context, and situation which operates and exists. Still, the notion of silence will exist and function in varying and differing ways, but moreover it will always be interpreted in discriminating ways, such as "minoritized" silence wherein imposed through forms of self-determination or systematic oppression could be viewed as a type of radicalization of silence. For instance, what occurs in moments when or where an individual from a "non-dominant" group or culture chooses to not speak, or is silenced out of a conversation? Similarly, how are they "read" in moments where they must step out of a room, and what is assumed about these actions, regardless of it being for something as innocent as stepping out to use the washroom or to answer an important phone call? It

seems such moments of “disruption” of silence – like tiny islands - invokes notions of dissent that challenges dominant spaces that exists much like the turbulent ocean that artist Marina Abramovic describes. Why not the other way? Why must silence exist as an island and not an ocean? Why must there be turbulence? Conceivably, the turbulent ocean enacts forms of oppression, much like a symphony of voices talking at a board meeting, where voices continue to talk over each other, only marginally listening to one another or obeying their own notion of Robert’s Rules of Order (Robert, 1915). Who is Robert anyway? Why “his” rules and order? Moreover, who ultimately constructs these ideas of behaviour, and who follows them unquestioningly?

Silence invites all kinds of misunderstandings and misassumptions, but then again it also has the potential for self-reflection wherein one’s own judgement or biases are called into question. For instance, why does one assume that the “minoritized” voice only speaks when needed or necessary, such as in moments where it is seen as necessary to address or redress forms of social inequity or injustice? Is it proper to assume that only certain voices can speak to certain issues, and only at certain times? Needless to say, silence can conceivably trigger new methods for deconstructing notions of sound, voice, and dominant discourses and hegemony. Then, of course, what occurs when the rules of silence are broken, assuming there are any rules to begin with?

Conclusion

In writing this paper, we have both had occasion to “rescript” what we think of as the meaning of silence. While silence raises many possibilities for critical analysis and discourse, it also brings to the forefront some of the deeper questions and meanings of knowledge production, asking what voices are heard over those that are marginalized. Brown and Strega (2005) deconstruct these very notions, arguing that research and practice often results in “only certain information, generated by certain people in certain ways” as being accepted or qualified as “truth” (p. 7). Through our discursive analysis of our research, teaching and practice, we have drawn attention to a myriad of ways that silence can be used to greatly effect different understandings of the self and culture. We examined how silence operates in different artistic practice and forms, including movement, theatre, music, and images. Moreover, while incorporating autoethnographic strategies we also discussed some of our own experiences and encounters with silence, thus bringing to the fore multiple layers of meaning that take into account different forms of knowledge production. In these layers we encounter different ways that knowledge is created, carried, acknowledged, and understood. In some cases, silence is remembered in memory, other times it dwells in the body, building (if not storing) an archive of knowledge. Indigenous actor, writer and educator Monique Mojica (2009) also writes about the body as being an organic site of stored knowledge, and whether it is silent or has been silenced, it is “an endless resource, a giant database of stories. Some we lived, some were passed on, some dreamt, some forgotten, some we are unaware of, dormant, awaiting the key that will release them” (p. 97).

When we talked through the paper we agreed that silence is as much compelling as it is inscrutable. The mercurial nature of silence invites many reactions – peace, fear, joy, frustration, concentration – and the list goes on, but we wanted in this paper to go some way in unraveling ways of knowing within silence. One way into ways of knowing with

silence is focusing on forms of representation such as images, music, space, and movement, which is one way that we chose to disentangle silence. Within the featured vignettes there were individuals who were silenced or at least felt silenced like Cole. Being silenced moves one to the margins and in many ways subjugates someone. At school, Cole never feels like he can indulge his desire to talk about the topics that interest him with teachers or peers.

Spy considered silence in relation to space and his praxis. He offers a rich instructional moment when a classroom environment shifted with the introduction of silence – moving from a space rife with tension eventually to one at ease, even in congruence with silence. Silence is used here as a deliberative practice to change the ethos of the class. Similarly, Jennifer profiles a moment during a research study on movement when silence slows down the pace of the schooling context, adjusting the rhythm and energy to a meditative pace/mood. As a coda, the second last vignette is a more ambivalent rendition of silence in images. Akin more to Cole and his sense of being silenced, the featured photos have opaque, liminal elements that fade into the background next to the punctum. But, does that render them silenced? Or, does it make them part of the visual narrative?

Stepping back, what seems clearer to us is that we cannot separate ourselves from silence – we are *a part of* silence. Productive, tense, or ambivalent, people exist within silence and its translucent quality allows individuals to use it to particular effect. Inside of silence gives us fluidity and mobility to shift moods and environments. Silence is transitional and it invites change. The qualities that constitute silence invite sensations of being in helpful, powerful ways.

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“Deluded and Ruined”: Diana Bastian—Enslaved African Canadian Teenager and White Male Privilege**Afua Cooper***Dalhousie University***Abstract**

This essay explores the vulnerability of enslaved African Canadian Black women by examining the death of Diana Bastian, an enslaved Black teenager who in 1792 was raped by George More, a member of the Governing Council of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Though Bastian begged for assistance during the resultant pregnancy, More denied her such aid and cast her aside. Bastian further appealed to More’s brother, a local magistrate, who also denied Bastian any help, and Bastian died giving birth to the twins More sired. Bastian’s owner, Abraham Cuyler, appeared to have been absent from the province at the time of Bastian’s rape, pregnancy, and labour. Bastian’s brief and tragic history is told in her death certificate recorded at the St. George’s Anglican Church, Sydney. This very succinct document brings to light the story of racial and sexual abuse on the Canadian frontier, and helps us to understand the marginal status of Black women’s lives in colonial Canada. I suggest in this essay that when we place enslaved Black women at the centre of Canada’s historical and colonial past, we come to a new understanding of the power and privilege White men possessed, and the catastrophic impact it had on Black women’s bodies.

Keywords: Slavery, rape, Black women, Loyalist migrations, Canadian colonialism, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

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This short essay is a homage to Diana Bastian (or Bustian), an enslaved Black teenager of Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Bastian lived most of her life as a slave in obscurity, but entered historical consciousness as a result of her rape, pregnancy, and subsequent death. We are able to learn of Bastian’s tragic story because of a brief burial-record document inserted in the St. George’s Anglican Church’s burial registry in Sydney.

Canada is not often acknowledged as a site of slavery even though in this country the enslavement of Black people had been institutionalized from the early decades of the European colonial project in the 17th century to 1833, when the British government abolished slavery in its colonies, Canada included (Cooper, 2006). Canada has created an image of itself as a “haven” for fleeing American Underground Railroad freedom seekers due to the fact that slavery was abolished there at least 30 years before abolition occurred in the United States in 1865 (Berlin, 2015). In creating and maintaining this image as a haven or “freedom’s land,” Canadians have banished from their collective memory their own history of enslaving. Thus, the enslavement of Blacks in Canada, as a historical process, is still largely unknown within Canadian historical studies as a whole (Cahill, 1995; Cooper, 2006; Elgersman, 1999; Whitfield, 2016).

This essay then acts as a corrective to the marginalization of the story of slavery in Canada. In 1792, Diana Bastian, a 15-year-old enslaved Nova Scotian girl, died giving birth to twins. Her body was wantonly used and her life stolen and broken by White men, and the system of slavery itself. Bastian was owned by Loyalist Abraham Cuyler and taken advantage of by George More, one of Cuyler’s friends and colleagues. These men were part of the colonial elite, and therefore in many respects can be described as founding fathers of an emerging Canadian nation.

A dominant Canadian foundational chronicle is that of Canada as a site of goodness and mercy. Yet this myth would be punctured were we to place the bodies of brutalized enslaved Black women at the centre of this telling. Placing enslaved Black women at the centre allows us to see how their bodies are critical to an understanding of constructed colonial narratives. Slavery, violence, brutality, and the attendant White male privilege are some of the suppressed stories of our past.

Abraham Cuyler, a displaced Loyalist from Albany, New York, owned Bastian. As his property, Cuyler had full dominion over the life and body of his slave woman. White-authored slave laws and the practice of enslavement made it so. Black enslavement and inferiority was codified in law, as was White freedom, privilege, and superiority. In the English slave codes of the Americas (beginning in Barbados in 1661; Jamaica, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland would later follow suit), enslaved people were codified as property or chattel. The French imperial Code Noir of 1685 also re-affirmed the chattel status of enslaved people. By 1700, in the Americas, to be Black was to be a slave until proven otherwise. These laws also made Blackness a mark of servility (J. L. Morgan, 2004; Obregón, 2005; Riddell, 1925; Rugemer, 2013).

NSARIM St. George's Anglican Church, Sydney; 1785-1827 p. 39 (microfilm copy only available at NSARIM, microfilm no. 11909X) www.gov.nsw.cairnsarm/ © 2010

Sept. 15th 1792. 39
 Buried Diana Bastian a Negro Girl belonging
 to Abraham Cuyler Esq. in the 16th year of her
 Age, she was deluded and ruined ^{at Government House} by George More Esq.
 the Naval officer and one of Gov. Macarminich's Council
 by whom she was pregnant with ~~two~~ Twins and
 delivered off, but one of them; she most earnestly
 implor'd the favor of Mr. More's Brother Justice
 to be admitted to her death, concerning her Preg-
 nancy by him; but was refus'd that with every other
 assistance by him & them. 51

Oct. 29th
 Baptized Mania, Daughter of
 Major Jeremiah Allen
 Philip Spurling } Sponsors
 Mrs. Mofat }

Figure 1. Burial record of Diana Bastian.

The story begins with a rape, that of Diana Bastian. It ends with her death giving birth to twins. George More, a White naval officer and member of the government's Executive Council, was the rapist. The record states that Bastian “was deluded and ruined at Government House by George More, Esq. the naval officer and one of Gov. Macarminich's Council” (see Figure 1). Using 18th century euphemistic language—deluded and ruined were code words for rape or sexual violation—the writer of the document tells us that George More raped Bastian and thus “ruined” her. More committed the heinous act at the Cape Breton government chambers, the very place from which the colony was administered, and where he worked and carried out his duties as a member of the Executive Council. The insert for the September 15, 1792 St. George's church burial records reveals that sad and tragic fact of Bastian's abuse and demise (Nova Scotia Archives, 2017).

This is the only written document we have about the life of Bastian, and it is an important document. Someone took time to record these incidents—of her “ruin,” her traumatic labour, her death, and her burial. Bastian, unlike most enslaved African Canadians, did not pass into obscurity and anonymity. This record of her burial ensures that for two and a half centuries later, we would know of the violence and atrocity that was committed on her body. We do not know what Bastian looked like. We do not know if she had parents or siblings, or if she was part of a

Black community. It could be that she left blood relatives behind in Albany, or other parts on the North and Northeast, as the American Revolution had convulsed the 13 colonies and divided families, slave and free, Black and White, and sent thousands of Loyalists as refugees to the four corners of the earth. Rebels (or patriots) seized slaves and other property belonging to Loyalists, and thousands of Blacks who were owned by rebels fled to British lines. Additionally, White loyalists reading the writing on the wall fled as fast as they could with as many enslaved Blacks they could feasibly take with them. For sure, Bastian’s Black community (slave or free) was divided by the Revolution as did the community from which her owner came (Gilbert, 2012; Pulis, 1999).

Abraham Cuyler

Bastian’s owner, Abraham Cuyler, was a prominent Loyalist born in a Dutch New York family. He was the last mayor of Albany under British colonial rule. Cuyler had the distinction of being the third member of his family to become Mayor of Albany, and he held this position until 1776, when the 13 colonies revolted against Britain. Cuyler sided with the Crown, which lost the war. As a result of his allegiance to Britain, the former mayor lost a lot. As a Loyalist he was beaten and jailed by the victorious Americans, and they seized his lands and home (Flick, 1901). Finally, in 1784 (a year after the peace was signed) he fled to Canada, first to Montreal where military governor Frederick Haldimand made him “inspector of refugees.” In Quebec, Cuyler was part of a community of thousands of Loyalist refugees who had fled the new United States. In Canada, this dispossessed group called on the British government to support them by compensating them for their loss. For many Loyalists this meant finding them new homes in friendly colonies, with gifts of land grants, tools, seeds, farming implements, and money, and for some, positions in the colonial service.

Haldimand realized that there was not enough land in Quebec to parcel out to the exiled, destitute, and disgruntled Loyalists, so he looked to the newly ceded colony of Cape Breton as a possible destination for loyalist immigrants (Sutherland, Tousignant, & Dionne-Tousignant, 1983). Cuyler himself also eyed Cape Breton, and convinced Haldimand that he could successfully settle thousands of the Quebec Loyalists in Cape Breton (Cuyler, 1784; Sutherland et al., 1983).

Cape Breton, which had been seized from France during the Seven Years’ War, was left underdeveloped, but now because of the Loyalist emergency it became open for British settlement. Cuyler received permission to migrate with a group of Loyalists domiciled at Quebec, and in the fall of 1784 eventually took 140 of such settlers with him to Cape Breton. The Loyalists first arrived in Louisburg, the old French capital, but eventually Cuyler himself acquired property and settled in Sydney, a new town founded largely by Loyalists and newly arrived settlers from England. As settlers—Loyalists and English—arrived in Cape Breton, a government was organized. It was not large enough to have a legislature, and so an Executive Council was established. Though it was its own colony, it was subservient to Nova Scotia. Joseph Frederick Wallet DesBarres, a Swiss military official working in the employ of the British Crown, was sent from England as Lieutenant Governor. The Executive Council would help DesBarres govern the colony (R. J. Morgan, 1987).

Cuyler was appointed member of the Executive Council, and was also made secretary and registrar of the colony. Next to the governor, and the attorney general, Cuyler was the most important official in Cape Breton. Reading through Cuyler’s biographies, one is struck by how

adamant he and other high-ranking Loyalists were in thinking that the Crown owed them, and thus sought relentlessly to recover as much as possible through appointments and largesse what they lost in the Revolution. It is likely that Abraham Cuyler felt that going from being the mayor of a bustling and thriving city (Albany) to a backwater settlement was a step down. He probably also questioned his decision to side with the Crown during the war (Flick, 1901; R. J. Morgan, 1975, 1983).

Cuyler’s time on Council was fraught with conflict; he fought incessantly with the governor and led a faction that thwarted a lot of the latter’s initiatives for the new colony. When DesBarres was recalled and William Macarmick installed as the new governor, Cuyler and his party continued to be a fractious presence on Council. Cuyler felt that he should be given a higher position, and also that he should have more say in the running of the colony (R. J. Morgan, 1983).

Many loyalists felt that having lost the war, they could no longer live in the newly formed United States, and therefore sought to relocate to Canada or other British possessions. But many like Cuyler, especially if they were White and male like he was, stood to gain in the British territories to which they fled. In their new homes, most were compensated with money, lands, and other kinds of largesse. If their enslaved property was not seized by the rebels, Loyalists were allowed to bring these slaves with them to their new homes (Jasanoff, 2011). White Loyalists brought upward of 1,400 enslaved Africans with them to Maritime Canada (i.e., New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island). Diana Bastian was one of these slaves (Whitfield, 2016), but was she the only slave whom Cuyler brought? Given his position and status, I suggest he had the ability to bring more than one slave with him to Canada.

At the same time, it must be borne in mind that many Loyalists fled the 13 colonies in such haste that time forbade them from bringing with them many cherished material possessions. Moreover, some of those possessions, like slave property, were seized by the rebels. Additionally, enslaved persons often used the confusion of the war to escape from both Loyalist and rebel owners. Some fled into the woods and forests and negotiated freedom on their own terms (e.g., runaways often joined Maroon groups or Native American tribes).

An example of enslaved Africans running off and seeking refuge among First Nations groups during the American Revolution is that of slaves belonging to François Lorimier, who worked as an interpreter with the First Nations at Oswegetchie, adjacent to Ogdensburg, New York. During the Revolutionary War, Lorimier sided with the British and fled to what became Upper Canada. However, his slaves deserted him and took shelter with the Oswegetchie tribe on the American side of the border. When Lorimier attempted to recapture his bondspeople, the Natives defended the Africans and told Lorimier that they would put him to death if he persisted in his attempts to capture the fugitives. Lorimier made a deposition to the Executive Council of Upper Canada on April 14, 1796, in hope of retrieving his enslaved labourers from the Natives (Canadiana, 2017). Such attempts to recover slave labourers were not uncommon at the time. For example, Ona Judge, one of the female slaves owned by Martha Washington, wife of George Washington, escaped from their household during the Revolution. Judge made it to New Hampshire, and though the Washingtons tried for years to capture her, they were not successful in doing so (Armstrong Dunbar, 2017).

We know that when peace was concluded after the Revolution, Cuyler returned at least twice to Albany to recoup his lost property. Was he also trying to regain lost enslaved Africans? Further research on Abraham Cuyler is needed to discover if he indeed was able to travel to

Canada with an entourage of enslaved people. What we know is that when Cuyler arrived in Cape Breton Island, he had Bastian with him. She was then 7 years old.

George More

Research indicates that George More was born in Ireland in 1748. He too was a Loyalist who had come up from the 13 colonies. He was also a naval officer (perhaps retired?) but at the time of the rape he was a member of Cape Breton’s Executive Council. Thus, More was a member of Cape Breton’s social and political elite. His brother was also a judge and justice of the peace. At the time of the rape, More was 44; Bastian was 15. That she was raped and impregnated by a much older man and then abandoned points to the vulnerable and precarious position of enslaved Black women, who by virtue of their status had no rights or honour, and thus were deemed unworthy of masculine protection (Beckles, 1999).

We can glean from her burial record that Bastian might have harboured the vain hope that More would acknowledge her and their offspring. But according to the document, “she most earnestly implored the favour of Mr. More’s brother, the justice, to be admitted to her oath concerning her pregnancy by him, but was refused that with every other assistance by him of them.”

Cape Breton historian Kenneth Donovan (2013) writes about the rape of Black women slaves in Cape Breton:

Whether they were aboard...slave ships during the Middle Passage or labouring in the cane fields of the...West Indies, female slaves were sexually assaulted by white males...so it should come as no surprise that female slaves in Ile Royale (Cape Breton) were also subject to rape and sexual harassment. (pp. 1).

For the time period Donovan looks at, he notes the presence of mulatto children mothered by slave women, and fathered by their White enslavers (Donovan, 1995, 2007).

Harvey Amani Whitfield (2012) in discussing the Bastian case notes that

her vulnerability as a female slave denied her the possibility of obtaining anything from More or his brother as judge. More being a member of the Executive Council and a naval officer, the elite of Cape Breton were not willing to hold one of their own accountable for his actions. More’s racial identity and class status trumped the fact that he had raped and impregnated a young enslaved teenager. In the end, the Executive Council, local society, and the legal system rebuked her pleas because of her gender, race, and slave status. (p. 17)

Surely, Bastian recognized the deep gulf that existed between her and More. She was a Black slave girl, and as such, a social outcast without any rights, honour, or privileges. As a result, she was disposable. More was a White elite gentleman, a naval officer, a member of the Governor’s Council, and a free and honourable man. The writer of the burial document described Bastian as “deluded,” suggesting that her naïveté caused her ruin.

Simply put, Bastian was Abraham Cuyler’s slave and George More sexually victimized her and caused her death. Cuyler then, as a result of losing both Bastian and one of the twins, lost his property rights and economic gain in her and her offspring. In other words, More had ruined his property. How did Cuyler respond to this? Both he and More sat on the Executive Council. They were colleagues—elite men who ran the business of the colony.

At the time of Bastian’s death, Abraham Cuyler was out of the colony. He had travelled to Montreal on business. On his return to Cape Breton, he liquidated his assets and left for greener

pastures. Thus, it could be that Bastian was fair prey for More because her owner was not around, and hence could not offer Bastian whatever protection he deigned to give her. But more than likely, More could still have had his way with Bastian even if her master was around. Whether or not Cuyler was angry at the loss of his slave girl and his investments in her, the elite of Cape Breton closed ranks around the passing of Bastian and protected George More.

The rape of Bastian was a non-issue because the gendered racist ideology at the time declared that Black women were “unrapeable.” As a result, George More literally got away with murder. By the time of Bastian’s rape, White people had gained ascendancy as a superior and privileged racial caste who wielded what scholar Edward Baptist (2014) called “a right-handed” power that wreaked havoc on Black people and their lives (pp. 89-90).

But there were a few people in Sydney who were outraged. Someone took the time to record Bastian’s death and burial, and they were far from pleased. Maria, daughter of one Major Jeremiah Allen, as well as Philip Starling and Mrs. Moffat (who both served as sponsors of the surviving twin), ensured that we today would know about Bastian—of her sorrow, her ruin, and her death, and the utter callousness of George More and his brother.

Giving Birth in Bondage

Slave laws dictated that enslaved women “bore children who belonged to the slaveowner from the moment of their conception” (Roberts, 1999, p. 23). This was exemplified in the principle of *partus sequitur ventrum*, meaning that children born to slave woman inherited the (enslaved) condition of their mother (J. L. Morgan, 2004; Riddell, 1920). Thus, the owner of the child was not the mother but the owner of the mother—in this case, Abraham Cuyler. One of Bastian’s babies died during labour and the surviving child, according to the burial records, was baptized, and possibly put into foster care. It is not known if Cuyler eventually claimed the surviving child or sold it. What becomes evident is that Bastian had very little support or care during her pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, and subsequent labour. The terse, deliberate, and chilly language of the burial record paints a picture of Bastian as someone who had no advocate, and who was callously used, abused, ostracized, and discarded by George More. Implicitly, his brother, the judge, was also condemned as part of the abusive duo.

In 1792, Cape Breton was a marginal colony within the British Empire, but it was adding its own story to that of the turbulent histories of the revolutionary Atlantic. Black people like Bastian were part of this turbulent history, and those who were slaves, like Bastian, moved along the ocean’s migratory circuits, their bodies commodified and used for the comfort and wealth of those who owned them. Upon Bastian’s body was writ large the violent, dehumanizing, racist, and gendered history of slavery in the Americas. Moreover, Bastian’s story illuminates how the construction of a colonial race ideology and a raced gender discourse emerged in British North America. Additionally, it takes us into the world of Loyalist migration, slave movement and displacement in the northern colonies, colonial ambitions of White men, and the ever-present metalanguage of race on Black women’s sexuality (Higginbotham, 1992). It also centres more than ever the privilege White men possessed on the colonial frontier.

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Making Visible and Acting on Issues of Racism and Racialization in School Mathematics

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Abstract

Schools, as social systems, may knowingly or unintentionally perpetuate inequities through unchallenged oppressive systems. This paper focuses on mathematics as a subject area in school practices in which inequities seem to be considered normal. Issues of racism and racialization in the discipline of mathematics are predominantly lived through the practice of streaming where students are enrolled in courses of different levels of difficulty. Such practice denies marginalized groups of students the full benefit of rich learning experiences. These issues should be of concern for activists, advocates, and allies as well as individuals and groups who are systematically and directly affected. The purpose of this paper is to make visible issues of racism and racialization in school mathematics to a range of stakeholders that include: school administrators, teachers, students, parents, education advocates, academics, educational researchers, and politicians. The ultimate goal is that the knowledge gained through this call to action will contribute toward eliminating social injustice in all school systems, particularly as it relates to skin colour, country of origin, culture, language, customs, and religion.

Keywords: Marginalized students, racialization, racism, school mathematics, streaming, tracking

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One of the challenges of education systems is to put in place practices that align succinctly between policies, research, and educational theories. Although knowledge of sociocultural theories (Herbel-Eisenmann, Choppin, Wagner, & Pimm, 2011; Moschkovich, 2002) may inform policy on equity, there is a disconnect in the implementation of these ideals. Most policy documents position equity and the collective good as their ultimate purpose; however, actual implementation in school practices and programs can be very different from the stated policy intent. For instance, in *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME, 2014) cites “Ensuring Equity” as one of its renewed goals for education; by that, the OME means that “All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood” (p. 3). The extent to which this statement is aligned with students’ lived experiences in some program areas could be significantly different than intended. That is exactly why in 2017 the OME found the need to create the Education Equity Secretariat whose mandate includes the design and implementation of the Education Equity Action Plan to realize the goal of ensuring equity (OME, 2017, p. 9). This Action Plan acknowledges de facto racism and racialization in the school system. From the outset the plan is characterized as the “province’s roadmap to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and bias from schools and classrooms to support the potential for all students to succeed” (OME, 2017, p. 4).

For far too many students, school mathematics is one subject area for which “rich learning experiences” and “inspiration to reach full potential” is currently a debatable issue (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016; Zevenbergen, 2002). The OECD’s *Equations and Inequalities: Making Mathematics Accessible to All* report argues that students with difficulties in mathematics and disadvantaged students stand to gain the most from highly qualified teachers, but unfortunately, they often are paired with the least-skilled teachers. Other school subjects are not necessarily immune, as Zevenbergen (2002) concedes: “While the implementation of streaming may be widespread, it appears to be more common in mathematics than most other curriculum areas” (p. 3). Only a small and select group of students may have been exposed to these two important ingredients leading to success in school mathematics. Recently published research argues that school mathematics remains a powerful social filter (Boaler, 2005; Herbel-Eisenmann et al, 2011). Other research flags streaming based on race, ethnicity, and social class as another filter for social mobility (Clandfield et al., 2014). These two filters constitute systemic racism that, according to the Government of Ontario’s (2017) *A Better Way Forward: Ontario’s 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan*, “is often caused by hidden and institutional biases in policies, practices and processes that privilege or disadvantage some people” (p. 10) or groups based on socio- and ethnographic traits.

Call for Action

The purpose of this paper is twofold: To make visible, and to call education stakeholders to action regarding issues of, racism and racialization specifically in school mathematics. The term “racialization” utilized in Ontario’s *Anti-Racism Strategic Plan* draws from the 1995 *Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System* and refers to racialization as “the process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life” (Government of Ontario, 2017, p. 11). I

argue that a first step in making the issue of racialization visible is exposure to racial inequities. I discuss a school board report that makes such connections clear (Yau, O'Reilly, Rosolen, & Archer, 2011). Further evidence is provided by other researchers (James & Turner, 2017; Parekh, 2013). These issues present as ethical dilemmas that people in all educational settings must deal with on a constant basis. Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2016) Multiple Ethical Paradigm approach constitutes a great model to assist in the analysis of such dilemmas. The paradigms include the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession. The *ethic of justice* deals with rights and laws and frequently serves as foundation for legal principles and ideals (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Many scholars (e.g., Apple, 2000, 2006; Bowles & Gintis, 1988; Giroux, 2013, 2015) are not convinced by the arguments put forward by the proponents of the justice paradigm. These scholars point to tensions between the ethic of justice, rights, and laws on the one hand and democratic ideals on the other. They also find inconsistencies between the laws themselves and the processes used to determine if the laws are truly just. Rather than accepting the ethic of those in power, scholars for the *ethic of critique* are inspired by critical theorists (e.g., Apple, 2000, 2006; Bowles & Gintis, 1988; Giroux, 2013, 2015) who push for the redefinition of concepts such as privilege, power, and justice. Their work is mainly based on the analysis of social class and its inequities. Generally, these critics are also activists who believe that discourse alone is not enough and must be supplemented by some kind of action, preferably political (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). For those advocating for the third paradigm—the *ethic of care* (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1992, 2012)—students are at the heart of every education system and they should be nurtured and encouraged. These researchers recognize the need for relationships and connections that are essential in education. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) see the fourth perspective, the *ethic of the profession*, as an independent model that can stand alone to deal with “formal codes of the profession and the standards of the field” (p. 7).

In an effort to be brief, this paper will consider only the *ethic of care* and the *ethic of critique* to provide some theoretical underpinning. Additionally, this choice is justified by the fact that the *ethic of justice* is seen as operationalized, in its legal sense, by those in power and the status quo while the *ethic of the profession* is often considered to be the extension of another paradigm. Academic streaming may take multiple forms. Sometimes it is through the use of human and material resources between different schools or different types of programs within schools. It could also be through differential treatment of students within classrooms or the whole school. For example, at the elementary level, in cases where there is more than one group of a certain grade, it is common to find that one group is more privileged than the other (Lleras & Rangel, 2008). That may well be because of personal characteristics of individual teachers, but it could also be due to intentional disparity of resource allocation among classes. At the high school level, for some identical course code, students may be grouped based on: behaviour, learning disabilities, demographic characteristics, or perceived socioeconomic status in addition to teachers' various qualification levels and experience (Kinnon, 2016). The following sections will pinpoint some of the problems in school mathematics as it relates to streaming. A brief overview of some of policies in place to substantiate streaming is presented, followed by the unveiling of some discriminatory practices in school mathematics. After identifying some social and opportunity gaps, the next two sections make a call for action through discussions and considerations.

The Problem

In the area of school mathematics, many people who observe a school classroom might question the claim that “all children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential.” In the same vein, the notion of “access to rich learning experiences” could be somewhat contradictory given that rich learning experiences are not generally the prerogative of poor schools in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods or some rural communities (see, for example, Khattri, Riley, & Kane, 1997; Kohen, Leventhal, Dahinten, & McIntosh, 2008). And that is regrettable when it is well documented that “disadvantaged ... environments are powerful predictors of adult failure on a number of social and economic measures” (Heckman, 2006, pp. 1900-1901).

The unfortunate reality in school mathematics is that there are some marginalized groups of students who are not at all inspired to reach their full potential either by what they see, what they hear from school personnel, or by the way their courses are selected in the first place. By marginalized or minoritized, this essay refers to all racialized groups defined as non-aboriginal people of colour, also referred to by Statistics Canada and in the Federal Employment Equity Act as visible minorities (Galabuzi, 2001). It is however important to acknowledge at the same time that not all people of colour are marginalized or feel minoritized. For example, this statement is true in the context of the United States where African American students are at a disadvantage as compared to their Caucasian and Asian peers when it comes to access to rich learning experiences in mathematics (Gutiérrez 2008; Lubienski & Gutiérrez 2008). In Ontario, there is evidence to suggest that certain minority groups are overrepresented in mathematics courses or classrooms in which rich learning experiences are rather rare or inexistent (James & Turner, 2017; Parekh, 2013). Such practice is generally known in the literature as streaming, which is a process of grouping students by their ability according to academic performance, educational needs, perceived postsecondary pathways, and any other tacit attributes. This practice is also known as tracking or grouping by ability (OECD, 2012).

In the Ontario context, it is important to understand or be reminded that in grade 8, all students must select between applied and academic courses for their grade 9 school journey. These pre-teens assisted by their guidance counsellors and their parents or tutors are to make decisions that will affect their postsecondary and potentially future career options. Any misstep, act of bad faith, or ignorance may lead to life-long consequences for the student in question. According to the OME's (1999) *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9–12: Program and Diploma Requirements* policy document, this system of applied and academic courses was introduced by the OME in 1999 for grades 9 and 10. The policy states that academic courses emphasize theory and abstract problems while applied courses focus on practical applications and concrete examples (p. 14). The original intention of the policy was to end streaming in Ontario schools and offer more options for all students, given these grade 9 and 10 courses are prerequisites for a range of “destination-based” courses in grades 11 and 12. Over the course of its existence, some argue that this policy offers the ground for some discriminatory practices through streaming (Clandfield et al., 2014). Some racial groups have been proven to be more affected than others. For instance, according to a report by Yau et al. (2011) for the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), it has been observed that:

Compared to the overall population, fewer Black students meet or exceed the provincial standard (Level 3) on Gr. 6 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests

for Reading and Writing, and even fewer meet the standard on the EQAO Mathematics test; also, fewer pass the Gr. 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). (p. 6) The report goes on to highlight that students whose parents are from the Caribbean, East Africa, and West Africa are less likely to feel positive about school rules or to sense that their background is valued and respected by school staff. Yau et al. (2011) conclude that “except for math, all three groups are as or more confident about their abilities; however, academically, all three groups generally do not fare as well as the overall population” (p. 6).

In addition to the above disturbing statistics, self-identified Black students in the TDSB, the largest school board in Canada and one of the largest in North America, are more likely to be overrepresented in intensive support and limited academic schools. Within this board, Parekh (2013) investigated school-wide structures at the secondary school level and found that there were in addition to mainstream schools, specialty arts schools, alternative schools, special education schools, and schools that offer limited academic and university preparedness courses. TDSB’s Specialized Arts schools offer prestigious programming and students are only admitted to them through a very competitive application and/or audition process. In the board’s Alternative schools, students and parents are promised something different from mainstream schooling with a unique and a distinct identity and approach to curriculum delivery. Special Education schools refer to Intensive Support sites with students identified as having Special Education Needs. Lastly, TDSB’s Limited Academic schools are institutions where academic or university preparedness level courses are not offered or the numbers are too few to justify postsecondary education pathways at the University level. Parekh (2013) noticed in his investigation of this board’s school structure that:

Self-identified Black students are the largest racial category represented in Special Education schools (30.2%) and are over triply represented. Self-identified Black students are also over-represented in schools with Limited Academic opportunities (19.3%), but are under-represented in both Alternative schools (10.4%) and ... Specialty Arts schools (3.2%). (p. 7)

Schools, as social systems, may knowingly or unintentionally perpetuate inequity through unchallenged oppressive systems. One area in school practices where inequities seem to be considered normal is in mathematics. Herbel-Eisenmann et al. (2011) contend that “school mathematics remains a powerful social filter, and understanding and explaining access to and success in school mathematics has been of considerable interest to the research community for some time now” (p. v). Though it is generally known and accepted that more academic and career pathways are open to students who do well in mathematics, tracking or streaming precludes predominantly minority students from courses leading to mathematics-related fields such as engineering, programming, and other hard sciences. Such practice leads to racial and socioeconomic segregation often associated with inequities in educational resources, teacher qualifications, and class size (da Silva, Huguley, Kakli, & Rao, 2007). Because of these inequitable factors pertaining to human and material resources, learning opportunities are then most of the time limited for disadvantaged students in less challenging tracks (Parekh, 2013). Noddings (2012) refers to this situation as the soft bigotry of low expectations.

In the TDSB’s *Structured Pathways* (Parekh, 2013), a rather bleak picture is drawn of the equity situation when it comes to streaming. Even though the applied pathway is generally presented to parents and students as an acceptable alternative to university, TDSB data indicates that only 10.9% of students who took the majority of their courses in the applied stream confirm

an admission offer to college after graduating. Of that same group, an additional 4.2% confirmed an admission to an Ontario University for a total of 15.1%, while a surprising 79.3% of them did not apply for postsecondary education at all (Parekh, 2013). In mathematics, in general, it is imperative to question discriminatory practices that promote inequities among different groups of students. It is no longer acceptable that students are treated as second-class citizens based on their mathematics course selections. If equal opportunities are to be provided to all children in Ontario schools, for instance, notwithstanding their ethnic background, it becomes a moral obligation not to segregate.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) recognizes that success in mathematics is mostly about opportunity. Streaming precludes some students from the opportunity to enjoy the benefit of high-quality mathematics. In its 2012 position statement, the NCTM made it clear that:

All students should have the opportunity to receive high-quality mathematics instruction, learn challenging grade-level content, and receive the support necessary to be successful. Much of what has been typically referred to as the ‘achievement gap’ in mathematics is a function of differential instructional opportunities. Differential access to high-quality teachers, instructional opportunities to learn high-quality mathematics, opportunities to learn grade-level mathematics content, and high expectations for mathematics achievement are the main contributors to differential learning outcomes among individuals and groups of students. (p. 1)

The problem of having marginalized students not well represented in high-quality mathematics (Munter, 2014) classrooms is not new. Researchers all over the world have investigated the links between academic streaming and socioeconomic status for years. According to Kinnon (2016), Canadian and English scholars usually refer to this practice as “streaming,” whereas their American counterparts choose “tracking” to refer to the same practice. Gamoran and Mare (1989) argue that “track assignment reinforces pre-existing inequalities in achievements among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 1146). Jo Boaler (2005), another well-known scholar in the mathematics education world, writes extensively on academic streaming and recognizes that the research into streaming has consistently yielded high correlations between social class and streaming “with social class working as a subtle filter that results in the over-representation of working class children in low groups” (p. 137). Kinnon’s (2016) extensive literature review on the subject revealed that researchers from different countries (e.g., Germany, Japan, Denmark, and Israel) agree that streaming tends to strengthen or maintain “preexisting socioeconomic inequalities in educational outcomes” (p. 24). It is imperative that government and different stakeholders examine who has a leading role to play in eliminating racism and racialization in school mathematics and ensuring students benefit equally from educational policies, programs, and services. The following section presents a brief overview of educational policies that inform our understanding of racism in school mathematics.

Policies in Place Against or For Racism

Issues of racism and racialization in school mathematics are complex and go back to very distant pasts. They do not happen in isolation and other school subject areas are not exempted of such problems. They are deep-seated in different aspects and levels of education systems as well

as in society as a whole. Clandfield et al. (2014) argue that “racialization should be seen as an act of social construction that seeks to maintain the dominance of the White power structure that uses the ideology of meritocracy to maintain the dominant order in education and society, consistent with the current hierarchy of globalizing capitalism” (p. 6). I would argue that education systems generally emulate the power structures and social constructs that perpetuate discrimination in society. I have experienced tacit processes in place that deny some students the opportunities of rich learning experiences. In the context of the Ontario education system, a case can be made that in applied mathematics classrooms, the “processes of racialization and colonization are mobilized to enable the practice of streaming, and how it manifests within schools and across the education system to deny Aboriginal and racialized students the full benefit of the learning experience” (Clandfield et al., 2014, p. 8).

One may argue that there is no policy in place that enables racism or inequities in Ontario. In Kinnon’s (2016) view, “academic streaming is a policy of formally grouping students based on their current academic ability and, in the case of Ontario, also by their supposed academic destination, be that university, college, or the workplace” (p. 17). Clandfield et al.’s (2014) seminal work *Restacking the Deck: Streaming by Class, Race and Gender in Ontario Schools* notes that “these conditions continue to represent both a severe social injustice and a tremendous waste of human learning potential, particularly in light of the increasingly widespread view that advanced formal education is an essential ingredient for the future wellbeing of our society” (p. 2). Issues of equity, racism, and race relations seem to be most of the time at the heart of any conversation pertaining to streaming. Gillborn (2005) reminds us that

As several studies have shown, over the last half-century issues of racism, “race relations” and “race” equity have featured differently in education policy. From early post-War ignorance and neglect (Lynch 1986), through periods of overt assimilationist and integrationist policies (Mullard 1982; Tomlinson 1977), it has been clear that, although the particular measures meant to address ethnic diversity have changed from time to time, one constant feature has been a place on the margins of education policy. (p. 13)

Often, there is a disparity between identified goals of educational policies and programs and the implementation of strategies and practices to reach such goals. On the one hand, there may be some disconnection between actual available resources to realize those goals and the real needs of school communities. On the other hand, sufficient resources may be available but people’s philosophies and biases diverge away from educational policies original intent. To that point, Gillborn (2005) argues that while “race inequity may not be a planned and deliberate goal of education policy neither is it accidental” (p. 2).

There are forces at play that tend to maintain the dominant Eurocentric knowledge systems and orders of life. Gillborn (2005) continues his argument admitting that “the patterning of racial advantage and inequity is structured in domination and its continuation represents a form of tacit intentionality on the part of white powerholders and policy makers” (p. 2). Gillborn’s statement is coherent with literature on the intentionality of White supremacy, Whiteness, and White privilege (Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). This is very fitting since this paper originated from the first *White Privilege Symposium* in Canada that took place at Brock University on September 30 and October 1, 2016. The theme of “tacit intentionality on the part of white powerholders and policy makers” is also coherent with McIntosh’s (1998) view on White privilege as:

an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks. (p. 74)

One of the corollary aspects of streaming is putting some people at an advantage based on unearned status and skin colour while denying the privilege to others and trying not to acknowledge the others’ non-privilege. While these sensitive issues are difficult to talk about and may make some people uncomfortable, they ought to be brought forth in conversations related to racialization in school mathematics whether by the government or the school community at large.

A government’s duties are sometimes thought to be narrowly limited to the vital tasks of protecting its citizens’ rights to freedom, liberty, justice, and prosperity. In some political discussions and debates, the role of government may be seen as a lever to influence, modify, or dictate the conduct of its citizenry. In addition to that, one might argue that governments are supposed to be the guarantors of the most vulnerable, the marginalized, and the defenceless. People’s trust in public institutions can be impacted by their sense of whether these institutions have policies that recognize and proactively respond to discrimination and prejudice. This role of government can be easily connected to what is happening in school mathematics.

In Ontario, many voices have been advocating for change in the education system. Among them are the voices of Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller (1992) in their groundbreaking work *Stacking the Deck*, and Clandfield et al.’s (2014) update of that same work, *Restacking the Deck*. Clandfield et al. unequivocally contend that, “from its origins in the middle of the 19th century, public education in Ontario has worked to ensure that the majority of working-class people will remain in their class of origin, while recruiting a small and select minority of them for social mobility” (2014, p. 2). Such observation supports critical theorists’ arguments that schools reproduce inequities similar to those in society (Bourdieu, 1977, 2001; Lareau, 1987, 2003). As mentioned earlier, the *ethic of critique* (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016) pushes for the redefinition of concepts such as privilege, power, and justice. It is mainly concerned with the analysis of social class and its inequities. From an *ethic of critique* perspective, tracking or streaming maintain working-class children in their place (Oakes, 1993, 2005). It is legitimate to wonder how current practices in school mathematics are the remains of discriminatory or racist ways of doing education that have not been challenged. These practices may have been in place for so long that they have become the norms that are generally accepted by all parties involved.

(In)equity in School Mathematics Practices

There are tremendous misconceptions about equity in education. Equity is not the same as equality. Equity means that each and every student has what he or she needs to be successful in his or her learning. According to the OECD (2012), “equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness)” (p. 3). Many teachers mistakenly think that being fair to their students requires that they give their students the same resources and means to be successful (equality). This understanding of equity principles is limited at best. In its 2014 position on *Access and Equity in Mathematics Education*, the NCTM argues that practices to support access and equity require comprehensive understanding and they include, but are not

limited to, holding high expectations, ensuring access to high-quality mathematics curriculum and instruction for all students, allowing adequate time for students to learn, placing appropriate emphasis on differentiated processes that broaden students' productive engagement with mathematics, and making strategic use of human and material resources.

This position, although taken by an American teachers' association, translates well with what should be equitable practices in any mathematics classroom, be it in Ontario or elsewhere. It is worth noticing that the NCTM's position does not focus on the amount or the distribution of material resources. Instead, the emphasis is on the strategic use of human capital and material resources. This position paints a vivid picture of what ultimately motivates all equity advocates and allies in pursuing social justice. The fact alone that resources are available does not guarantee equitable use. In the same statement, the NCTM (2012) defends that "when access and equity have been successfully addressed, student outcomes—including achievement on a range of mathematics assessments, disposition toward mathematics, and persistence in the mathematics pipeline—transcend, and cannot be predicted by students' racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds" (p. 1). This conclusion is different than what is experienced in most mathematics classrooms in Ontario based on the work of Clandfield et al. (2014), Kinnon (2016), and Riegle-Crumb and Grodsky (2010).

The original intention of educational policy laid out in the OME's (1999) *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9–12: Program and Diploma Requirements* was to end streaming in Ontario schools and offer more options for all students. In reality, however, most students in applied courses predominantly from racially and ethnically diverse groups (Parekh, 2013) are still subject to differential treatment. Ruck and Wortley (2002) concur that "Canadian research suggests that minority students, especially Black students, are more likely to be enrolled in basic and general levels of academic programs and show disproportionately higher levels of school dropout than do other students" (p. 185). Most experienced high school teachers and more and more research on streaming recognize that students in the applied stream generally have access to less qualified teachers and are mostly exposed to less rich learning experiences (Clandfield et al., 2014; People for Education, 2015). In the same report, the advocacy group contends that "these course selections largely determine students' educational pathways throughout high school, and typically influence postsecondary options and career opportunities" (People for Education, 2015, p. 27). For students and parents who may be ill-informed or misguided, one can understand how problematic their course choices could be if they fail to see the connections with postsecondary destinations. Their situation is even more problematic as data shows that most students in applied mathematics enroll in more than two other applied courses. The 2015 People for Education report indicates that in 2014, "62 percent of students taking applied math were taking three or more applied courses, and that only 11 percent of students in applied math take no other applied courses. Students are, in effect, grouped into separate tracks" (p. 27). This form of grouping lends itself very well to discriminatory practices that exist in school mathematics as will be elaborated upon in the following section.

Many studies have looked at the association between applied courses and low-income students (Anisef, Brown, & Sweet, 2011; Clandfield et al., 2014; OECD, 2012). Whether it is in the United States, England, Canada, or elsewhere, the results seem to converge toward the same conclusion that streaming is connected to systemic inequalities. For example, most studies in Ontario on the topic agree that the applied/academic streaming system in Ontario schools work to perpetuate current socioeconomic and educational disparities among different groups and

ethnicities. Researchers such as Parekh, Killoran, and Crawford (2011) have found a clear connection between socioeconomic status and academic streaming. People for Education (2013a, 2014, 2015), a very active education advocacy group in Ontario, has also pointed to this correlation repeatedly in its annual reports. This organization has raised a red flag on the fact that there is a strong tie between family income and taking applied courses. People for Education (2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2015) has been very vocal and critical of the Ontario system of academic streaming not only in many of its annual reports but also in its various public statements in the national press and on social media.

According to Clandfield et al. (2014) and based on People for Education's reports, analysis of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAQO) demographic data, along with the 2006 Statistics Canada Census data, shows that schools with higher percentages of students from low-income families also have higher proportions of students in applied mathematics in Ontario. In the same vein, the 2015 People for Education report highlights that a recent study from the TDSB found that only 6% of students from the highest income neighbourhoods took the majority of their courses as applied courses, compared to 33% of students from the lowest income neighbourhoods (p. 27). In TDSB's *Structured Pathways*, Parekh (2013) reports that only 8.8% of the 12.6% of self-identified Black students across the secondary school panel in TDSB take the majority of their courses in the academic program of study (p. 3). These results are clearly an indication of social justice issues that urgently need to be addressed.

Social and Opportunity Gaps

Whenever the word "gap" is mentioned in education literature, people tend to refer to the *achievement* gap. This is even more evident in literature stemming from the United States where achievement gap between different ethnic groups remains a significant and current research theme of great interest (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Riegle-Crumb & Grodsky, 2010). It may be argued that the resulting social and opportunity gaps from streaming are even more concerning. Educational gaps generally lead to less promising employment opportunities for minority and racialized groups. When at all employed, they are generally underemployed and are the most subjected to the tacit rule of last hired, first fired (Blair & Fichtenbaum, 2012).

More Canadian research and data are needed to better understand the historical patterns of systemic discrimination towards racial groups. Nonetheless, it is not a coincidence that there is over-representation of these marginalized segments of Canadian society, particularly Blacks and Indigenous people, in penitentiary institutions (Reasons et al., 2016; Roberts & Doob, 1997). They also are more likely to be over-represented in more labour-intensive, low paying occupations, and low income sectors (Galabuzi, 2001; Nakhaie, 2006). One can argue that the systemic reproduction of marginality is reflected in the over-representation of minority groups in activities involving the sub-economy, such as illicit dealing and prostitution, as identified by researchers in the United States (Clarke, Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz, & Fey, 2012; Kramer & Berg, 2003). One may contend that it is a vicious cycle of economic disenfranchisement. To that point, Riegle-Crumb and Grodsky (2010) argue that "social class differences in students' families account for a substantial portion of the achievement gap between majority and minority youth, as African American and Hispanic parents have historically had lower levels of education, occupational status, and income compared to Whites" (p. 251). In addition, Galabuzi's (2001) work

points to the role of historical patterns of systemic racial discrimination as key to understanding the persistent overrepresentation of racialised groups in low paying occupations and low income sectors, their higher unemployment, and their poverty and social marginalisation. Historical patterns of differential treatment and occupational segregation in the labour market, and discriminatory governmental and institutional policies and practices, have led to the reproduction of racial inequality in other areas of Canadian life. (p. 3)

The social and opportunity gaps seem to be viscerally entrenched in systemic discriminatory societal norms that are at play in education systems around the world. Who are benefiting from these gaps? Why do they seem to linger persistently even though there is a great deal of consensus that changes are required? Part of the answer seems to be provided by Clandfield et al. (2014), who contend that “The responsiveness of public education to the interests of the business community and of the upper middle class has ensured the existence of discriminatory patterns of schooling, from system-wide policy planning to the making of local classroom decisions” (p. 3). The recurring question of the purpose of schooling then comes back to the table. It is worth wondering whether Ontario school systems are preparing students “to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens” (OME, 2017, p. 4) or responding to the interests of a certain business community by supplying lowly paid labour that ultimately benefits the wealthiest class in society.

Streaming in school mathematics is an unethical practice. School leaders cannot close their eyes on practices affecting marginalized segments of the student population. To do so is clearly unethical. They should not, in any case, emulate Aristotle who did not see the evils of slavery. It is unethical to justify injustice and inequity on the basis of social constructs and master narratives that “present contrasts between groups of people by advantaging dominant groups and disadvantaging members of marginal groups such as women and people of color” (Berry, Thunder, & McClain, 2011, p. 11). There is something wrong in any society in which a student can be denied an opportunity to take a high-level mathematics course, for example, because of his or her ethnic backgrounds or social status. It is equally wrong when students can be in a mathematics course and yet presuppositions place them in a deficit predicament based solely on racist assumptions. Educators need to recognize that “one does not need an absolute principle to urge moral change, and one does not have to accept practices that induce pain and humiliation just because they are judged right by another group of beings” (Noddings, 2012, p. 155).

The Way Out

The issues of discrimination in school mathematics are not recent nor are they only problematic in Ontario schools. James and Turner (2017) recognized that “for at least 30 years, the provincial government has been aware of and has tried in various ways to address unequal educational outcomes” (p. 6). According to Clandfield et al. (2014), public sentiment against early streaming was very well present in the 1980s. The Ontario Federation of Labour, several local parents’ groups, and the New Democratic Party (NDP) all advocated for the elimination of streaming. Clandfield et al. (2014) add that “In the early 1990s, the political conditions for progressive educational change were relatively open, despite the mobilization of the business community against such attempts at reducing social inequality” (p. 3). In recent years, the education advocacy group People for Education has been very vocal about delaying streaming,

arguing that the idea of keeping “options open for all students” is not a reality yet in Ontario. In its 2015 report, the People for Education claimed that “forcing students as young as 13 years old to choose between two paths through school closes many options” and “may disadvantage our most vulnerable students” (p. 28). People for Education’s recurring recommendation is to delay course selections to the end of students’ secondary school journey.

The OECD’s (2012) *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* report acknowledges that the best education systems across OECD countries are those that understand the need to combine quality with equity. In school systems where equity is a priority, socio-ethnographic traits or family background should not be obstacles to reaching educational potential. The OECD (2012) concedes that eliminating systemic obstacles to equity in schools will not only improve equity but also will benefit disadvantaged students, without hindering their peers’ improvement. Regarding streaming, the OECD unequivocally recommends avoiding early streaming and delaying student selection to later years in secondary schools. The report concludes that “early student selection has a negative impact on students assigned to lower tracks and exacerbates inequities, without raising average performance” (OECD, 2012, p. 10). Delaying students’ choice to be enrolled in academic or applied courses to a later point in their secondary school journey could be a good start. However, this alone will not solve discriminatory streaming in any school system.

It is time to try to implement at a systemic level some alternative and non-streamed approaches within school systems. Many marginalized, racialized, and minority groups of students could benefit from de-streaming and mixed-ability grouping. Compassionate, ethical, and transformational leadership is what seems to be required from those in charge of school systems as a precursor for the elimination of discriminatory streaming and other forms of social injustice. To that end, Parker and Shapiro (1993) argued that “one way to rectify some wrongs in schools and in society would be to give more attention to the analysis of social class in the preparations of principals and superintendents” (as cited in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016, pp. 14-15). Additionally, the OECD (2012, pp. 11-12) puts forth five key recommendations to support disadvantaged schools and students in their improvement journey:

- Strengthen and support school leadership;
- Stimulate a supportive school climate and environment for learning;
- Attract, support and retain high quality teachers;
- Ensure effective classroom learning strategies; and,
- Prioritize linking schools with parents and communities.

As mentioned earlier, deferring streaming represents a good start and an option that is not too threatening for those in favour of tracking. However, school systems need to be challenged to look at eliminating streaming altogether in schools. By doing so and strategically rethinking postsecondary options, students have a better chance of choosing career paths that may lead to a more successful future. In parallel, education systems need to focus more on educating teachers on unconscious biases and privilege (Solomona et al., 2005).

Discussion and Considerations

Issues of racism and racialization in school mathematics are not for activists, advocates, allies, and those who are systematically and directly affected. Rather, many education system stakeholders are in some way or the other called upon to address or take position against these

issues. For that reason, this paper is written in the hope it will reach an audience as wide as possible including school administrators, teachers, students, parents, education advocates, academics, educational researchers, and politicians. The desirable ultimate purpose is that these stakeholders are more conscious and knowledgeable about long-lasting consequences of streaming. Ultimately, as Mackenzie and Knife (2006) argue, the hope is that they would adhere to the principle that “all knowledge is political and that research should be aimed at eliminating social injustice, particularly related to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other marginalized groups” (as cited in Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 60).

Several challenging questions remain unresolved from an *ethic of critique* standpoint. For instance, whose responsibility is it to change the status quo? Are children of the marginalized predestined to reproduce children who are in turn marginalized? Aren't there inconsistencies between the Ontario government's assertion that “All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood” on the one hand and the streaming in school mathematics on the other? Satisfying answers need to be found very quickly as schools become more and more racially and culturally diverse (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Also, in an increasingly competitive world, denying some students access to high-quality mathematics or other core programming based solely on race and some other superficial demographic factors limits the pool of talents from which some sectors could indeed benefit. According to the OECD (2012), the economic and social costs of students failing and dropping out of school are just too high, whereas successful completion of at least high school education provides individuals with better employment and healthier lifestyle prospects resulting in greater contributions to public budgets and investment.

It is well known and accepted that “more educated people contribute to more democratic societies and sustainable economies, and are less dependent on public aid and less vulnerable to economic downturns” (OECD, 2012, p. 9). It is worth asking to what extent training for school administrators and guidance counsellors cover grounds pertaining to successful societies and sustainable economies. It comes down to the purpose of schooling. And whatever that purpose is or whatever is agreed upon, parents and students should be well informed.

Conclusion

In the spirit of an *ethic of care* and an *ethic of critique*, this article sought to question and challenge ideas, practices, policies, programs, and individuals in power. The intent was to determine whose best interests are served by these ideas, practices, policies, programs, and individuals in power and whether they are truly just. It also sought not only to send out alarm signals but also call to action school administrators, teachers, students, parents, education advocates, academics, educational researchers, and politicians. Ultimately, the hope is that this call to action helps to eradicate some inequities in our society, and in particular, in school mathematics.

Streaming remains problematic in school mathematics in Ontario. There is evidence in the literature reviewed for the article and in the data from one of the largest and most diverse school boards in Canada (the TDSB) that most marginalized students are not inspired to reach their full potential in mathematics with access to rich learning experiences (see James & Turner, 2017). There are major inconsistencies between the goal of “Ensuring Equity” and the implementation of educational policies favouring streaming or tracking. There is a pressing need to eliminate

racism and racialization through streaming in school mathematics and to ensure that students benefit equitably from educational policies, programs, and services. As is evident from this article, there remains much to be done in this area of equity in school mathematics in Ontario, and even more broadly so in Canada.

Streaming provides the ground to deny some students the privilege of reaching their full potential. Most research in Ontario on this topic concurs that the applied/academic streaming system in Ontario schools works to perpetuate current socioeconomic and educational disparities among different groups and ethnicities. Through the lenses of an *ethic of care* and an *ethic of critique*, this paper stresses the need to address both perceived and real discrimination in education systems. Practically, in addition to changing streaming policies, urgent training for grade 8 teachers, high school guidance counsellors, and administrators on the negative consequences of streaming could be an excellent way to start providing adequate counselling to students and their parents and tutors. The just-released *Education Equity Action Plan* (OME, 2017) and *A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan* (Government of Ontario, 2017) provide a framework and opportunities to address most of the issues of racism and racialization raised in this paper. However, based on James and Turner's (2017) detailed account of more than 30 years of provincial initiatives regarding racism and race relations, the end of the tunnel may not be that near.

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Teaching the Possible: Justice-Oriented Professional Development for Progressive Educators

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Abstract

Providing justice-oriented professional development for progressive educators has historically been a site of tension. To address this, The Progressive Education Network (PEN), the leading professional organization of progressive educators in the United States, brought together over 800 educators for its 2015 National Conference, titled “Teaching the Possible: Access, Equity, and Activism!” This article documents PEN’s framework for facilitating an opportunity for educators to engage in dialogue about areas of social injustice throughout education and within their own schools. Findings derived from a discourse analysis of workshop abstracts published in the conference program suggest that the conference provided professional development in three areas: 1) workshops were designed by teachers to share useful methodologies relevant to the conference theme with other teachers; 2) workshops encouraged attendees to critically examine how problematic issues in education are commonly understood, then reframe them to consider the issues from different perspectives; 3) doing so gave rise to an understanding that in order to imagine innovative solutions to systemic problems, one must first be able understand how different groups of individuals experience the problems. This analysis establishes that by aligning the conference with a critical, justice-oriented theme, the workshops were designed to provide attendees with opportunities to investigate their own roles in producing, changing, and interpreting socially-just learning and teaching in their own school contexts. This is important because it advances the study of equitable access to progressive pedagogy, while at the same time utilizing Desimone’s (2009) framework for judging effective professional development for teachers.

Key words: Social justice curriculum, progressive education, education access, teacher professional development

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Historically, encouraging young people to analyze, critique, and work to fix enduring issues of social injustice has been one of the most compelling and contested aspirations underpinning progressive education (Bruce & Eryaman, 2015; Counts, 1932; Cremin, 1961; Dewey, 1916/2008; Kliebard, 1995; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Currently in the United States, the effects of divisive political tension, the inequity inherent in standardized testing, and the rise of common curricula that fail to recognize the contextual differences between individual schools give renewed urgency to developing curricula that encourage teachers and students to think critically about meaningful ways to address inequity in both education and in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2012). One way of addressing this issue is through focused and effective teacher professional development.

The Progressive Education Network (PEN), the leading national professional organization that provides pedagogical guidance for K-12 progressive educators, endorses this need for training justice-oriented citizens. Through their biannual professional development conferences, the PEN executive council works not only to guide teachers to foster these values in their students, but also to critically examine and confront the injustices inherent in progressive pedagogy. To address historic issues of inequality, the theme of PEN's 2015 National Conference was *Teaching the Possible: Access, Equity, and Activism!* Over 800 progressive educators came together to share their experiences and engage in a dialogue to uncover areas of social injustice throughout the education system, and particularly within their own schools.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the social justice-oriented agenda of the workshops presented at the PEN 2015 National Conference. Drawing on the work of Westheimer and Kahne (2004), a justice-oriented curriculum will be generally defined as one that provides regular, intentional opportunities for students who “critically assess social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes; seek out and address areas of injustice; (and) know about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change” (p. 240). This study aims to understand how professional development is designed as a site for progressive educators to engage with justice-oriented curricula. Findings indicate that in order for students to be engaged, democratic citizens, they must work alongside role model educators (Giroux & McLaren, 1986) who listen to and honor the truth in perspectives different than their own (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Findings derived from a discourse analysis of workshop abstracts published in the conference program suggest that the conference provided professional development in three areas: 1) workshops were designed by teachers to share useful methodologies relevant to the conference theme with other teachers; 2) workshops encouraged attendees to critically examine how problematic issues in education are commonly understood, then reframe them to consider the issues from different perspectives; 3) doing so gave rise to an understanding that in order to imagine innovative solutions to systemic problems, one must first be able understand how different groups of individuals experience the problems. This analysis establishes that through a meaningful attempt to align the conference with a critical, justice-oriented theme, the workshops were designed with the intent of providing attendees the opportunity to investigate their own roles in producing, reproducing, changing, negotiating and interpreting socially-just learning and teaching in their own school contexts.

Literature Review

Defining Progressive Education

Progressive education has historically been difficult to define, explain, study, and disseminate. In his history of the influence of the Progressive Era in the United States around the turn of the 20th century on education, Lawrence Cremin (1961) cautioned readers who were searching for a definition of progressive education that, “none exists, and none ever will, for throughout its history education meant different things to different people, and these differences were only compounded by the remarkable diversity of American education” (p. x). In another attempt to define it, progressive educator and scholar, Alfie Kohn (2008) reasoned that, “if progressive education doesn't lend itself to a single fixed definition, that seems fitting in light of its reputation for resisting conformity and standardization” (para. 1). Despite these difficulties in defining progressive education, one commonality that Read (2013) found through interviews with progressive educators was that regardless of other pedagogical beliefs, teachers who identify as progressive focus less on what to teach, and more on how to teach, and who they teach. Labaree (2005) explained progressive pedagogy capitalizes on the needs and interests of the students to teach transferrable skills through engagement in self-guided learning. Educators accomplish this by incorporating projects “that integrate the disciplines around socially relevant themes; and it means promoting value of community, cooperation, tolerance, justice and democratic equality” (Labaree, 2005, p. 277). Tom Little, a previous PEN president conducted an ethnographic study of 45 PEN member schools in order to define the commonalities of progressivism. He determined that, despite vast differences in contexts and student bodies, each of the schools “prepare(s) students for active participation in a democratic society, in the context of a child-centered environment, and with an enduring commitment to social justice” (Little & Ellison, 2015, p. 52). Because the current study focuses on the work of PEN schools and teachers, I have chosen to use Little and Ellison’s (2015) definition of progressive education as the basis of analysis.

Progressive Education as Justice-Oriented Pedagogy

The definitions for progressive education laid out above are all rooted in the philosophy that John Dewey formulated in his seminal work *Democracy and Education* (1916/2008). Dewey’s premise was that children’s education should serve as a base for growth and further learning both in and out of school throughout the course of their lives. To foster this experience, progressive administrators and teachers organize the school in such a way that they have time and space to examine the students’ interests and life experiences. Children’s interests then shape how teachers direct the classroom activities in order to give students an opportunity to learn through inquiry and experimentation. This process of hands-on, active learning encourages students to grow the habits of mind necessary to learn by locating their interests and exploring how they are connected to other areas of study. In this type of learning environment students not only learn an answer, but they achieve a deep understanding of problems and how their integral components are interrelated (Dewey, 1916/2008; Kliebard, 2005).

Viewing education as both separate parts and a connected whole does not only apply to academic learning; it is also the core of a justice-oriented curriculum (Westheimer & Kahne,

2004). This aim originates from Dewey's notion of *social reconstruction*, a pedagogical practice where students examine the world around them and work collectively to tackle systemic injustices. Through this process, students develop skills for "active citizenship, participation and strong democracy" (Bruce & Eryaman, 2015, p. 6). Encouraging students to become fluent in this kind of thought demands that progressive educators are adept at teaching a socially just curriculum. To do so, Giroux and McLaren (1986) clarified that teachers must actively "assume a pedagogical responsibility for attempting to understand the relationships and forces that influence their students outside of the immediate context of the classroom" (p. 236). One method for accomplishing this is for teachers to use culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that this critical pedagogy is underpinned by three criteria: "a) Students must experience academic success; b) Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160).

Contested History of Progressive Education

Despite its attention to democratic learning and social justice, progressive education has been critiqued as an elite pedagogy since its inception (Counts, 1932; Cremin, 1961). The tenets of progressive education require that school administrators offer small class sizes so that teachers can get to know their students well, and that administrators grant teachers a significant degree of professional latitude and trust to design curriculum and lessons that foster individual student interest and aptitude. Because of these requirements, progressive pedagogy has historically existed mainly in private schools and has almost exclusively benefitted children from families who can afford it (Counts, 1932; Cremin, 1961; Labaree, 2005; Thinnes, 2015). This is problematic because the vast majority of students in the United States attend public schools. Furthermore, over half of public schoolchildren live within the boundaries of high-poverty school districts (Edbuild, 2016). High poverty districts have fewer resources, fewer highly qualified teachers, and often have higher crime, truancy, and dropout rates (Welner & Carter, 2013). Therefore, the persistence of progressive pedagogy in private schools renders it largely inaccessible to the majority of students in the U.S. who cannot afford access to it (Counts, 1932; Thinnes, 2015).

The pedagogical tension behind calling progressive ideals 'elite' hinges on the difficulty of balancing the aim of schooling to recognize and attend to the needs of individual students, while at the same time teaching students to be aware of how their needs both impact and are influenced by the needs of the larger community. Progressive pedagogy "placed the individual at the center of the stage, yet it perpetually criticized the competitive character of the present social order, indicating that it really rejected the philosophy of individualism" (Bowers, 1964, p. 175). This critique dates back to 1932 as two opposing camps of educational theorists were attempting to define progressive philosophy. One camp saw the primary aim of progressive pedagogy as tailoring education to the needs and interests of the individual child, while the other camp emphasized the importance of fostering socially just pedagogy (Bowers, 1964).

George Counts (1932) espoused the latter aim in his address to the Progressive Education Association, the leading coalition of progressive educators and theorists of the day (and forerunner to PEN). He admonished the inequitable practices of those present by urging progressive education to "emancipate itself from the influence of class... develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion a compelling and challenging vision of human destiny,

and become less frightened ... of imposition and indoctrination" (para. 8). Counts' opponents refuted that a comprehensive theory of social welfare (i.e., a standardized, justice-oriented curriculum) would require mandating a common curriculum and vision to progressive schools, thereby imposing external values that may not be meaningful to individual schools (Bruce & Eryaman, 2015). Such imposition was seen to be in direct opposition to the work schools do to develop contextually specific programming. Counts' critics argued that attempts to define a common approach to curricular design undermined the ability for schools to be responsive to the complex, ever changing needs of their stakeholders (Bruce & Eryaman, 2015).

Teacher Professional Development as a Means to Ameliorate Inequality

Because of the variety of experiences educators have in schooling before pursuing teaching as a profession, teacher learning is conceptualized as an "apprenticeship" (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Furthermore, in practice, teacher professional development is a "patchwork of opportunities - formal and informal, mandatory and voluntary, serendipitous and planned - stitched together into a fragmented and incoherent 'curriculum'" (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 174). Literature on teacher professional development calls for learning opportunities that attend to content matter, learning theories, curriculum development, pedagogy, and student learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999). However, due to external forces, it is nearly impossible to determine the effectiveness of discrete aspects of professional development on teachers' classroom practices (Desimone, 2009). One commonality among the literature on teacher learning is that teachers' own practice and classroom contexts are one of the most powerful sites of professional learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009). However this research is quick to point out that due to contextual variety among teachers and classrooms, it is not simply enough for a teacher to learn within the confines of his or her own classroom. Borko (2004) noted that successful teacher professional development programs have improved teachers' instructional practices and student learning through the use of items such as: "instructional plans and assignments, videotapes of lessons, and samples of student work" (p. 7). By studying these and other artifacts, teachers are able to grown their expertise beyond their own experiences.

As outlined above, determining a common framework for implementing justice-oriented curricula in multiple school contexts is not feasible, unless it can be made context specific. This task of adapting practices to meet the needs of individual schools, students, and teachers is not unique to progressive educators, though. It is the dilemma of all professional development for educators (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Education is seen largely as an individual profession where each teacher independently develops and designs learning material to meet the needs of his or her set group of students. Injecting a systematic approach to teaching and learning in such a siloed environment requires a nuanced understanding of what teachers know, what teachers believe, in what context they work, and who they teach (Wilson & Berne, 1999; Desimone, 2009).

Ball and Cohen (1999) suggest that effective professional development encourages teachers to operate on a fundamental foundation of trust and respect for the opinions and views of other teachers as well as students. The ability to value alternative perspectives creates an environment where teachers can analyze their own practice and "hold ideas and interpretations out for scrutiny, discussion, and debate in ways that are not seen as personal challenges to individuals" (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 27). Furthermore, Wilson and Berne (1999) recommend that professional development be designed with attention to teacher knowledge, which encompasses

knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of students, and knowledge of pedagogy. Specifically, they ask, “what categories of knowledge should good teachers possess?” (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 203). Little and Ellison’s (2015) ethnographic study of 45 progressive schools distilled the individual practices of the teachers at each school into a list of six tenets common to all progressive schools and educators. One of these tenets: “Support for children to develop a sense of social justice and become active participants in America’s democracy” (Little & Ellison, 2015, p. 52) is particularly relevant to understanding how issues of social justice are understood and acted upon by progressive educators. For that reason, I use it as evidence of the knowledge good progressive educators should possess.

Counts’ argument that progressive education is weak on its approach to justice-oriented curriculum has been an on-going site of self-reflective tension among progressive practitioners. To address this, the Progressive Education Network (PEN) encouraged its members to consider their role in educational inequity through the 2015 PEN national conference. Chris Thinnes (2015), a PEN board member, echoed Counts’ (1932) elitist critique in his blog post titled “Progressive Education has a Race Problem.” He argued that in order for progressive pedagogy to regain a place in mainstream educational policy, progressive educators must recognize and work to address the racial tensions inherent in the pedagogy. As Thinnes (2015) explained, “a progressive pedagogy that fails to be responsive to the voices of students, educators, families, or communities of color is not a pedagogy that should, or will, influence the trajectory of American education policy or practice in these times” (Para 1). He went on to outline how the 2015 PEN National Conference was designed to begin a frank conversation about ways PEN can support its member schools to do more to provide progressive education for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. Thinnes (2015) reiterated Counts’ (1932) argument that progressive pedagogy, because it is mainly taught at private schools is, for the most part, delivered to a majority White, upper-class student body. Modern progressive educators are charged with the same difficult task as their predecessors: balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of the society. Doing so pushes progressive educators to question the inequity of offering progressive pedagogy only to students who have access to it (Thinnes, 2015). This critical examination of progressive pedagogy and practices drives the current study. Progressive education clearly has an orientation to social justice, but implementing a justice oriented curriculum in a systematic way risks losing the meaningfulness of the practice, unless it can be made both context specific, and available to a wider cross-section of students.

Methods

Study

In order to understand how large scale, nationally organized, professional development is provided for progressive educators, this study explores the case of the 2015 PEN National Conference. I chose this conference through theoretical sampling. PEN is the largest organization of progressive educators in the United States, and can trace its roots back to the founders of the progressive education movement in this country. Its conferences are marketed to attract teachers, as opposed to administrators or academics. A main component of PEN’s mission is for progressive educators to “play an active role in guiding the educational vision of our society” (progressiveeducationnetwork.org, ND). Since 2005, PEN’s all-volunteer committee of conference coordinators has organized biennial national meetings to provide professional

development in a way that allows participants to share informative, useful educational strategies, while being mindful of the problematic nature of promising generic solutions and ‘best practices.’

Given the complex history of progressive education theory, the contested nature of implementing a comprehensive, justice-oriented pedagogy, and the calls for more rigorous empirical studies of teacher professional development, this study explores the manner in which PEN provided professional development for its constituents. Specifically, I answer the following research question: In what ways did the professional development provided through the 2015 PEN National Conference demonstrate how progressive educators conceptualize social justice issues?

The answers to this question came from a qualitative content and discourse analysis of the workshop abstracts included in the conference program. I accessed the conference program through the PEN website at the time of registration (<http://www.progressiveeducationnetwork.org/events-2/events-archive/>, ND). At that time, a supplemental .pdf that included workshop abstracts was also available on the events webpage.

Content Analysis

For this study, content analysis is understood as, “the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes” (Julien, 2008, p. 121). This thematic analysis of the workshop abstracts was based on the extant literature explained above about the justice-oriented aim of progressive educators. The conference theme *Access, Equity, and Activism: Teaching the Possible!* resonated with Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) definition of a justice-oriented curriculum as one that fosters an ability to critically assess social situations and structures to explore underlying causes to inequality and work to redress them in a democratic fashion. Therefore, my first step in analyzing the conference program was to use the conference themes as a priori codes, or codes that are already in existence, not generated from within the data (Saldaña, 2013). In the electronic .pdf of the conference program that included workshop abstracts, I used the *find* function to locate all instances of the words: *access*, *equity* and *activism*. I created a separate document for each of the three key terms. For each occurrence of the word *access*, I copied the entire abstract into the *access* document; for each occurrence of *equity*, I copied the abstract into the *equity* document; and I did the same for each occurrence of *activism*. In this way, I reorganized the conference program into three separate documents – one document for each theme. When an abstract used more than one of the three terms, I copied it into all of the relevant documents. For example, if an abstract used both *access* and *equity*, I copied the whole abstract into both the *access* document and the *equity* document. In total there were 120 workshops. Of those, 26 used the word *access*, 32 used the word *equity* and 25 used *activism*. A total of 74 out of the 120 workshops mentioned at least one of the conference theme words in either their title or their abstract.

Discourse Analysis

After separating the conference abstracts out thematically, I conducted a discourse analysis of each document and then of the documents as a whole. My aim in this analysis was to understand the “social practice” of professional development that is designed to infuse access, equity, and

activism into progressive pedagogy. In this analysis, the conference abstracts served as the discourse between those providing professional development and those seeking to access it. According to Fairclough (2002), the relationship between discourse and social practice is dialectical, in that social practice is a form of discourse, while discourse shapes the social practices of a group. Furthermore, Fairclough (2002) argues that, “social events are causally shaped by (networks of) social practices - social practices define particular ways of acting, and although actual events may more or less diverge from these definitions and expectations, they are still partly shaped by them” (p. 25). I uncovered the social practices of the conference workshops by analyzing the abstracts to understand: the *discourses*, or ways in which progressive educators represent issues of social justice; the *genre*, or the actions progressive educators are to take to combat inequity in education; and the *styles* of progressive educators, or the attitudes that progressive educators are to take up as they address issues of social justice in their schools and with their students (Fairclough, 2002). This analytic strategy is in line with the research on teacher professional development. Much of that work operates within a situative framework that conceptualizes teacher learning as rooted in “socially organized activities and individuals' use of knowledge as an aspect of their participation in social practices... learning has both individual and sociocultural features, and ...characterize(s) the learning process as one of enculturation and construction” (Borko, 2004, p. 4). In this framework, the abstracts are evidence of a professional development curriculum.

Findings

As a result of the initial a priori coding of the workshop I organized the data into three separate documents to reflect the conference themes: access, equity and activism. I read through each document separately and used “open coding” to identify and label the context in which the workshop presenter operationalized the key conference theme in the abstract (Saldaña, 2013). In this initial round of coding, I delineated between 20-25 codes, or separate ways in which the conference presenters operationalized each term (access, equity, and activism). In the second round of more focused open coding, I read through the initial codes to look for codes that were similar and that could be combined (Saldaña, 2013). After analyzing each document separately, I compared the codes for each of the categories to one another to look for overlapping codes. That process yielded three separate, thematic codes (Franzosi, 2004). Those themes were:

- (1) *Utilizing pedagogy*, which included teaching techniques for student engagement and learning objectives for the participants to be able to take an idea back to their own context;
- (2) *Reframing social issues*, which encouraged the participants to understand how social issues are commonly framed, then analyze how these issues could be experienced or perceived by others. These sessions highlighted the importance of perspective, historical significance, and societal or political structures that perpetuate inequality;
- (3) *Understanding diverse perspectives*, which delineated specific causes or groups of people for whom sessions aimed to raise awareness. The causes most commonly advocated for were: the environment, LGBT/ gender/ sexuality issues, disability, community issues, and issues of race and culture.

These themes will be further explicated and implications for their repeated use within the program will be analyzed in the following sections.

Utilizing Pedagogy

The theme of *utilizing pedagogy* encompasses three sub themes: 1) workshops that state specific aims to share teaching methodologies with participants; 2) workshops that share strategies to engage students in curriculum; and 3) workshops that provide time for participants to consider how to employ the workshop content in their own context. Examples of workshop abstracts that exemplify the utilizing pedagogy theme are:

- “Participants will consider activities, such as problem-solving puppet shows, that may inspire a spirit of social activism in their [preschool] students and will have the opportunity to create a ‘plan for engagement’ by identifying one social justice issue relevant to their school/classroom”
- “This workshop will provide you with a framework to bring hands-on citizen science into your classroom and school community”
- “ Participants will consider ideas for how to increase engagement and relevance within their content studies, ways of leading students to connect more fully with themes of equity and activism, and methods for adapting heavy, serious material for an elementary-age audience”

These representative examples show how session abstracts highlight the goal of providing participants with concrete, hands-on approaches that had been successful in the presenters’ own contexts and could be adapted to fit other contexts. The sessions are designed to provide time and space for participants to understand the practices in their original contexts, explore their transferability to other environments, and begin to work through the process of adapting practices to be relevant in each participant’s unique school and classroom.

Sessions that explicitly state the outcome of sharing teaching methodologies are directly related to the PEN principle of providing professional development to guide a progressive educational vision. Teachers who share the successes and struggles they have in their classrooms encourage other teachers to critically assess their own practices while imagining new possibilities for their own classrooms. This open dialogue between teachers from different backgrounds and contexts serves to promote Little and Ellison’s (2015) call for progressive educators to come together to understand commonalities between their situations in order to share success stories with a more common progressive voice. Also, by engaging in analytical discussions of pedagogy, conference attendees interact with teachers from diverse backgrounds to inform, and perhaps transform their teaching (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Nager & Shapiro, 2007). Workshops designed to generate pedagogical discussions among participants also serve to address the concern of providing a standardized, overarching pedagogy of professional development to progressive schools and educators. By allowing educators to engage in an analysis of their own practices and compare and contrast them to the practices of others, conference participants can self select what aspects of the workshops are most applicable to their context, allowing them to consider justice-oriented pedagogy in the context of their own students.

Reframing

Reframing explains workshops whose abstracts addressed how problematic issues in education are commonly understood and discussed. These workshop presenters asked participants to imagine what the educational implications would be if common assumptions were

to be questioned or examined from different perspectives. Reframing workshops highlight the importance of perspective, as well as the historical foundations for dominant narratives. They ask participants to examine the societal and political structures that perpetuate inequality. Examples of abstracts that utilize reframing are:

- “Participants will be asked to interrogate the impact of class, race, and culture on Harlem since the turn of the century to now, and consider how these contribute to a thesis about equity and justice for communities of color nationwide”
- “Disability, when viewed as a natural form of human variation, challenges society to examine how widespread beliefs continue to marginalize individuals”
- “The goal of this workshop is to involve participants in some deep and courageous thinking about progressive education and about how progressive we are, in fact, being in our schools”

These workshops encourage participants to adopt a lens of “transformative intellectualism,” which Giroux and McLaren (1986) explain is one that enables teachers to “reclaim space in schools for the exercise of critical citizenship via an ethical and political discourse that recasts, in emancipatory terms, the relationship between authority and teacher work, and schooling and the social order” (p. 213). Through this lens, participants contend the politics of knowledge by examining biases inherent in education as an institution, and the personal biases they themselves hold. Once educators realize their own standpoint, they can see it as historically and culturally situated within a larger systemic matrix. When participants are able to have an open, judgment free conversation about biases, they can more critically view their teaching practice and how their diverse students and families may interpret it. Conference workshops that pushed a reframing agenda recognized this and provided support for participants to understand inequity and injustice as located within a societal context, as well as an individual context. Just as Counts (1932) urged progressive educators to do over 80 years ago, the reframing workshops sought to ameliorate the gap between the needs of the individuals and the needs of the school community.

Diverse Perspectives

Stemming from the theme of reframing is the idea that in order to imagine innovative solutions to systemic problems, one must first be able to see the problem from a different perspective. In order to promote justice-oriented curriculum, teachers must be open to honoring the various ways their students experience social issues. Examples of workshops that encouraged this are:

- “Participants will dive into diverse genders and sexualities as experiential sites of possibility for teaching”
- “This workshop will invite participants to share stories and strategies of activism rooted in relationships between schools and community organizations”
- “In our workshop, participants will see how intergenerational programming promotes equity by cultivating reciprocal relationships between the young and the old, where both generations’ voices are heard”
- “We will share stories, strategies, and resources for participants to use in their school settings that provide access to families and promote equity for all”

Dewey was a proponent of diverse schools as far back as 1916, when he wrote, “the intermingling in the school of youth of different races, different religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment (1916/2008, p. 21). This intermingling has been

linked to positive social and educational influence on individuals, particularly when students interact and socialize informally with individuals from different racial and cultural backgrounds, (Chang, 2002) and more so when they are actively engaged in critical discussions (Gurin, Dey, Gurin, & Hurtado, 2003). Even if students are not engaged in critical dialogue, studies show that the more diverse that small groups in classes can be, the more complex and novel ideas they will generate (Antonio et al., 2004). This effect is amplified if students have a diverse set of friends outside of class (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). Furthermore, informal relationships with diverse peers are shown to have a positive impact on cognitive growth (Gurin, Dey, Gurin, & Hurtado, 2002) as well as an increased sense of comfort when working with people of different racial backgrounds (Kurlaendar & Yun, 2007).

The workshops that encouraged participants to acknowledge and honor the value of diverse perspectives employed what Ladson-Billings (1995) calls, “culturally relevant pedagogy.” A hallmark of this pedagogy is engaging students in learning for democracy and justice (Nagda, 2003). Integrative activities that challenge students’ embedded worldviews have been shown to encourage them to apply theoretical knowledge learned in classroom settings to solutions for social problems (Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012).

Discussion

Implications for Addressing Inequity in Progressive Pedagogy

Through a discourse analysis of the workshop abstracts provided for the 2015 PEN National Conference, I uncovered the social practices that the progressive educators and presenters in attendance used to conceptualize issues of social justice. Operating from the theoretical framework provided by Fairclough, (2002) I analyzed the program for discourses, genres, and styles. The key *discourses*, or ways in which they represented issues of social justice encompassed a deliberate attempt to recognize diverse perspectives and shift the thinking of participants to consider how social issues are understood by students of color, students with different learning and physical abilities, and LGBT students. The *genre*, or the actions progressive educators must take to combat inequity in education include paying attention to the historical significance and societal or political structures that perpetuate inequality. An additional consideration that was addressed was to provide techniques that progressive schools that do not cater to a diverse body of students can do to broaden the reach of their impact. Finally, the *styles*, or the attitudes that progressive educators are to take up as they address issues of social justice in their schools and with their students, that were espoused by the conference workshop abstracts encouraged schools and teachers to generate an atmosphere of trust, a belief in the positive intent of others, and a commitment to helping students become self-advocates for their own learning needs. Together, this analysis fulfills Little and Ellison’s (2015) call for further research on progressive education in order to “move our highly effective strategies into the mainstream, where they belong” (p. 50).

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

To advance more empirically valid methods for studying teacher professional development, Desimone (2009) developed a framework for measuring the effectiveness of professional development. This framework proposes that effective professional development can be judged on

four criteria: “a) content focus, b) active learning, c) coherence, d) duration, and e) collective participation” (Desimone, 2009, p. 183). Workshops that fell under the utilizing pedagogy theme shared teaching methodologies, student and engagement strategies with participants. These types of workshops had a content focus, meaning that they linked the activities to specific subject matter and to student learning. Workshops that provided time for participants to consider how to employ the workshop content in their own context encouraged active learning and collective participation. Because PEN states that one of their aims is to guide progressive educators to expand the reach of progressive pedagogy, all of the workshops aligned with Little and Ellison’s definition of progressive education. This ensured that the conference was coherent, or in line with the teaching philosophy of its organizers, its presenters, and presumably its attendees. Finally, Desimone’s (2009) framework finds that the most effective professional development for teachers requires at least 20 hours or more of contact. The conference lasted two and a half days, so it meets this criterion, as well.

If conference attendees did walk away with an understanding of themes explained here, and they follow the PEN principle of being an educational leader by sharing their progressive model with others, it will be a formidable step in bridging the rift between child-centered progressive philosophy and justice-oriented progressive philosophy. Through participation in the professional development provided through the 2015 PEN National Conference, progressive educators encountered a basic toolkit of critical awareness that can help them to teach the possible to each and every child.

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Moving from Chasm to Convergence: Benefits and Barriers to Academic Activism for Social Justice and Equity

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Abstract

There are many natural links between academic work and activism that can be used for social justice and equity, but remain underdeveloped in higher education. Using the concept of liminality and the inclusion of personal voice that is central in Scholarly Personal Narrative methodology, this article explores academic activism in multiple ways. First, a series of “purposeful conversations” with educators at the University of Malta suggest that the level of self-affiliation with activism is influenced by academic discipline and the presence of impactful successes related to activism. Challenges within academic activism include devaluing activism within academic structures, and balancing the roles and actions of academic, activism, and personal lives. Second, benefits of activism in student learning are described, including (a) using synoptic learning as a curricular organizing concept for intellectual development, equity, and social justice and (b) exploring activism as a robust organizing concept for student learning across disciplines. Third, systemic barriers (e.g., maintenance of privilege) and anti-activism as moral high ground (e.g., activism as dangerous, too radical, narrowly appropriate, and unnecessary) are identified using two examples of curricular approval processes at a Midwestern university. Fourth, strategies to disrupt barriers to academic activism suggested by these results are presented.

Keywords: Academic activism, systemic inequities, curriculum, Scholarly Personal Narrative, liminality, synoptic learning

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I am an academic activist. Even as I write the words as the author of this piece, I have a lingering reluctance to make the claim that I am an activist, fearing that I am unworthy to assert something that should be reserved for those who have risked more, done more, achieved more in creating change. For me, defining and owning my personal activism as an academic is a tough nut to crack. Describing the process “in a nutshell” is more complex than the idiom allows. I define activism for myself broadly, framed by a widely used quote by Marian Wright Edelman, Founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, and two questions by social justice activist Paul Kivel. Edelman said, “Enough committed fleas biting strategically can make even the biggest dog uncomfortable and transform even the biggest nation. You just need to be a flea against injustice.” Being a flea for justice can take many forms. Despite the frequency of narrow definitions of what activism is, there are few impactful, positive deeds that are not activism.

Kivel (2011) asked, “What do you stand for? Who do you stand with?” (p. 316). In my experience, the first question is more easily answered than the second, as actions taken to “stand with” require applications of beliefs through behaviors that may not be easy. Who one stands *with* reveals the truth of what one believes, where “the rubber hits the road.”

The scope of this article is shaped by the following additional context of who I am and what I do. My work as an academic activist emphasizes teaching and curricula with an always present eye toward improving issues of social justice and equity. Another focus is exploring institutional structural barriers to educational equity. The essence of what I believe about my own academic activism is that my *choices* in teaching, scholarship, and service are guided by a belief that what I can do has impact, whether immediate or long-term, whether visible to me or not. My *actions* are driven by persistence, and my *strategies* derive from application of skills where I am strongest. I am compelled to push through my reservations about considering myself an activist because activism can take many forms, and occurs in actions both large and small. As an educator, I believe that activism as a curricular organizing concept is underexplored as a way to assist students in linking their passions to their intellectual development, and that activism is a robust concept that can be used across many disciplines. As a member of the post-secondary community, I believe that there is considerable work to be done in colleges and universities in viewing activism as a relevant and essential part of meeting institutional visions and missions regarding equity and social justice, and in eliminating the structural barriers in institutional policies and practices that hinder that work.

Conceptual Approaches to Moving from Chasm to Convergence

Liminality

I am not alone in grappling with the challenges of identifying as an academic activist. Puar (in Greyser, 2012), Playet (2014), and Goldrick-Rab (2014), among others, reflect on the meaning of academic activism from their personal perspectives. A common theme in their words is the difficult process of defining and balancing the worlds of academia and activism, as if each world is on a different side of a chasm that can’t be breached.

The sense of being “betwixt and between” is at the heart of liminality, a theoretical construct coined by anthropologist Victor Turner in the 1960s to refer to the ambiguity that occurs during the process of rituals, where one is at a threshold. Turner adds “outsiderhood” and “lowermost status” as connected to liminality in the following description.

...*liminality* represents the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two

positions, *outsiderhood* refers to actions and relationships which do not flow from a recognized social status but originate outside it, while *lowermost status* refers to the lowest rung in a system of social stratification in which unequal rewards are accorded to functionally differentiated positions (as cited in La Shure, 2005, para. 14).

The words of academic activists in describing themselves frequently capture the sense of liminality. The response of Jasbir Puar, Professor of Women's Studies at Rutgers, to an interview question about the relationship between activism and academic work eloquently articulates the challenges of segmenting and defining academic life and activist life.

The binary or the finite distinctions between academic work and activist analysis is an impossible one for me to inhabit. Like many in my position, I could not tell you where my activist analysis ends and my academic work begins, or vice versa. What interests me is how to address the productive nature of the binary between activism and academia and attend to the historically hierarchical relations of the two realms (Greysen, 2012, para. 2).

Playut (2014) describes her personal struggle and journey, including a longing for engagement with others.

Having always been too academic for the activists and too activist for the academics I have spent most of my time trying to create a new understanding by straddling both worlds. I knew I was not alone but I had a hard time understanding if there was a "we." I knew there were people around who seemed to engage in activism *in spite* of their academic standing but it was harder to identify people who used their academic training and resources as part of their activism, and vice versa. Those whom I heard about and admired from a distance seemed far away and scattered – big names but not real. People whom I could read or listen to but not people with whom I could sit down and have a cup of coffee and *learn* with (para. 3).

Using the concept of liminality is promising in its centrality to shared challenges voiced by academic activists. It is also appropriate for the study of marginalized groups, and is emerging in cultural studies. For example, Rollack (2012) uses liminality in her work with critical race theory and counter-narrative. Morgan (2016) explores the relationship between satire and racial identity.

Scholarly Personal Narrative

In addition to academic activists being in a place of liminality, it can be argued that the scholarship of academic activism is similarly situated, lacking theoretical constructs or methodologies that are widely used across disciplines. Although most disciplines have theoretical frameworks that are used by activists within their academic field, the dearth of interdisciplinary theory specific to academic activism isolates academic activists from each other and reduces opportunities to provide examination of collective context, themes, meaning, and strategies.

Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) is a qualitative methodology developed by Nash (2004) that blends personal stories, voice, and scholarship in narrative, allowing for integration and synthesis of meaning. SPN has increasingly been used as a methodology across disciplines to write about social justice, privilege, and marginalization (Nash and Viray, 2014; Hyater-Adams,

2012; Unger, 2014).

For each academic activist, there is a densely woven tapestry of experiences and beliefs that create their stories—stories that have meaning for both acts of activism and intellectual connections of activism within academic life. SPN provides a promising methodology to explore the liminality, breadth, and personal nature of academic activism, and to advance the development of shared theoretical constructs.

As I consider the development of my thinking as an academic activist in the context of SPN, I have been influenced by events in both my scholarly and personal lives that reflect points of chasm and convergence. In the next sections, I will highlight some of those events.

Conversations about Academic Activism at the University of Malta

Context and Process

Adding to the voices from the previous sections, the question, “What does academic activism look like, and how do academics view their own activism?” guided a series of conversations I had with educators at the University of Malta in December 2015. My interest in Malta began in the 1980s, when I spent several months there during a three-year period studying the impact of tourism on culture and built environment. Malta is a small European Union (EU) country with a rich history of activism in social, economic, and political issues. In my early work, which included contacts with educators at the University of Malta, I observed that the University is integrated into the cultural fabric of the country, where academics work closely with both government entities and non-government organizations (NGOs). I saw the unique challenges and opportunities for social change that were present in a small country, in contrast to larger countries such as the United States.

The small geographical scale of Malta, my knowledge of the culture, and the educational-political connections of the University made Malta ideal to explore academic activism beyond the literature and my own experiences. Prior to my 2015 trip, I perused University of Malta faculty vitas and scholarship to identify people with interests similar to my own, focusing on social, political, or educational equity and change. Initial contacts were made, and I had conversations (ranging from 45 minutes to two hours) with ten people. Four were from a newly formed, interdisciplinary university division, the Faculty of Social Wellbeing. Two were from the Faculty of Education. One was from History, another from the Humanities, and one from the Institute for Tourism, Travel, and Culture. A tenth person, a former Director of Tourism in the Ministry of Tourism, joined the tourism meeting.

Purposeful Conversation

The term “purposeful conversation” has been used by Cookson (2009), who discusses the relationship of modern technology to the conversational approach in Socratic intellectual processes. For my conversations in Malta, my goal was to create a space for purposeful conversation that encompassed listening, reflecting, and learning from the faculty members there.

Each of the informal conversations was adapted to allow the educator to guide the direction, which allowed greater opportunity for them to articulate their personal beliefs and interests, disciplinary perspectives, and expertise. What emerged was indicative of true conversation—a

back and forth of engaging with ideas with peers, following up on interests, discussing teaching strategies and potential collaborations, taking twists and turns instead of a straight path. Questions were used to guide the conversations, but not all questions were asked of all educators. What are your personal activism interests? What strategies/perspectives do you use? What are issues in being both an educator and an activist? What are the biggest equity issues and challenges in Malta? What does activism look like? What are models of successful activism? How does activism connect to your teaching?

Through speaking with each person about their histories and beliefs and what I learned separately from their public scholarship and work, I began to see patterns of similarities and differences in who self-identifies as an activist, perceptions of challenges, and curricular connections to activism.

Who Self-Identifies as an Activist?

Three factors related to self-identification as an activist emerged from the collective conversations.

Impact of level of self-identification as an activist. Faculty level of self-identification as activists was critical in their ability to think and talk about activism explicitly. Whether or not each person self-identified as an activist, and their definitions of activism, were related to (a) how explicitly activism was integrated into their academic discipline, and (b) their primary professional affiliations outside of the University. Not surprisingly, educators who were part of the Faculty of Social Wellbeing (FSW) were the most likely to identify themselves as activists, as their predispositions, expertise, and work aligned with traditional definitions of activism (e.g., social work, youth studies, gender studies). In one of my first interviews, an FSW educator greeted me with a smile, an extended hand, and intentionality in the clear statement of her identity. She said, “Hello. I am an educator activist.”

Similarly, educators whose work included collaboration with NGOs were more likely to identify as activists than those whose work focused within governmental agencies and/or their disciplinary and scholarly organizations. This difference likely reflects the impact of narrow definitions of what activism is and who activists are; again, the educators engaged in more traditional activism strategies are more likely to see themselves as activists.

Passion as a foundational element to activism. During the course of the conversations, I realized that *passion* was what was shared by both those who viewed themselves as activists (activism-identified) and those who did not (disciplinary-identified). It became clear to me early on that my conversation topic of “academic activism” was somewhat puzzling for those who did not view themselves explicitly as activists. In one conversation, for example, I knew the person had spent many years involved in developing and applying an effective and impactful equity framework that had been used in many settings and countries. In the beginning of the conversation, he did not define activism as part of his work, but when I asked him to tell me about the framework, his responses clearly reflected both connections to activism processes and his passion for equity.

Importance of impactful events. Most of the conversations included sharing of specific actions or events where each person felt their involvement contributed to positive outcomes or change. These were seminal events in being an activist or pursuing something that they cared about that propelled their work. For example, one faculty member, actively and publically involved in the European refugee crisis, described in detail the mobilization of activist social

workers, lawyers, and educators to prevent the turning away of a group of refugees who had arrived on the Mediterranean Sea shore of Malta by boat. The unexpected event was met with swift and organized action by committed people, who successfully provided services and safe haven for the immigrants.

Challenges Within Academic Activism

A challenge to being an academic activist that was discussed by several educators is the level of valuing and rewarding activism within broad academic structures. Some of the educators expressed feelings of a lack of “fit” between their activism and academic lives, echoing the words of others presented earlier in this paper.

The impact of strong administrative support and valuing of faculty was evident. Administrators in the group articulated how they saw themselves as collaborators with their faculty in the intellectual engagement of their fields, as well as leaders in providing vision and support to scaffold faculty work. Conversations with the faculty members confirmed the value and appreciation of that approach—an approach that is in sharp contrast to administrative models that are authoritarian, “top down,” and that emphasize hierarchy and compliance with external mandates at the expense of intellectual engagement.

A contrast to the United States that surfaced in the conversations was that there appear to be fewer corporatization and external mandates in higher education in Malta than what have proliferated in the United States during the last 20 years. Faculty in Malta continue to have a level of autonomy and academic freedom that allows them to make intellectually grounded choices that are respected.

The personal dimensions of balancing the roles of academic, activism, and personal lives varied in the conversations, but essentially focused on making choices for time and energy on professional matters, and in how to incorporate activism into teaching and writing. Most of the activist-identified educators spent considerable time in community engagement. A primary concern for faculty was the challenge of deciding where to focus when, as one educator put it, “so much work needs to be done.” A secondary focus across multiple conversations was on determining the “fit” of their work to University rewards systems.

Curricular Connections to Activism

Not surprisingly, the level of curricular connections to activism made by educators varied. Educators who self-identified as activists talked about the importance of including the connections between personal activism and social justice in the content and pedagogy of their courses; content and activism were explicitly linked. Educators who did not self-identify as activists emphasized the content of the disciplines, with varying degrees of explicit inclusion of activism.

Collectively, the conversations enriched my thinking about the range of intellectual and disciplinary perspectives that are linked to activism and what is shared in academic activism across cultures. They also contributed to my belief that there are many unexplored opportunities to use academic activism to enhance student learning.

The Case for Academic Activism in Student Learning

Activism as a Curricular Organizing Concept

When students care about something, they are on fire to learn. Anatomically, when intensely focused, cells in the brain impact other cells, making connections faster, memory retrieval quicker, and shielding out extraneous stimuli easier. The opposite experience of tedious work, metaphorically referred to as “mind numbing,” is based on those anatomical factors that enhance deep thinking. And, although the goal of educators is rarely to intentionally create experiences that are perceived as tedious for students, it happens, particularly when students do not see the learning as relevant, important, or interesting.

Synoptic Learning

Finding the “sweet spot” to achieve deep thinking and maximize student learning is elusive. It requires awareness of new information—seeing what was previously unseen—and connecting that information in meaningful ways through analysis and synthesis. This approach—synoptic learning—focuses on making connections and exploring complexities by blending and considering what is unified and together (the prefix “syn”) and what is seen (“optic”).

The word “synoptic” has been applied to learning, for example in assessing integration of student learning (Principles of Assessment, n.d.) and in connecting learning from two or more areas or learning modules (Press, 2014). Synoptic learning is ideal for equity and social justice work, which requires both awareness of new information and concepts, and understanding multiple perspectives. Moving from awareness and understanding to developing action and strategies is enhanced by exploring and applying the tenets and rich history of activism movements, and can allow students to achieve deeper meaning from their own learning.

Activism as a Robust Concept for Intellectual Development

Most academics are intellectually engaged and passionate about their field, and through their academic content and “ways of knowing and doing” have the ability and expertise to make explicit connections between issues and activism. Methodologies and content vary, but academic disciplines have at their heart the relationship of deep understanding of what has been and is to the meaning for the present and future.

Connecting activism to intellectualism is also possible *across* disciplinary fields. If intellectualism at its core is “thinking about thinking,” then college students experiencing activism from a variety of intellectual perspectives across disciplinary fields in have great potential in contributing to their own intellectual development.

Philosopher Albert Camus (1965) describes an intellectual as “someone whose mind watches itself.” Seeking equity and social justice is an intellectual endeavor. The intellectual process of the mind watching itself can be applied to self-examination of choices related to activism and its impact, and well as to developing strategies and pedagogies for curricular applications.

Barriers to Academic Activism

Context

The concept of “the mind watching itself” as an act of intellectualism can also be extended to the role of “the mind watching others,” with “others” including the behaviors, policies, and practices of inequality in post-secondary institutions. Structural barriers within institutions are rooted in privilege, and fueled by narrow definitions of what activism is and who activists are.

There is often a disconnect between answers to the questions discussed earlier, “What do you stand for?” and “Who do you stand with?”, in colleges and universities. From institutional mission statements to personal declarations supporting equity, public statements frequently do not align with actions.

Dismantling structural inequities requires examination of the details within the policies and practices of institutions. The “stories” within institutions, documented by public materials, are frequently replicated elsewhere, and are therefore important in providing insight into pervasive privileged practices in higher education. The following two stories of curriculum development provide examples of barriers in course approval processes. Arguably, course approval processes are “ground zero” for curricular change; what is approved or not approved defines the curriculum, and the curriculum shapes what is learned and valued. The first story focuses on the approval process of a university-wide dominant privilege course; the second details the approval process of a department-level course on activism.

Maintaining Privilege

“Developing strategies for social change is not an appropriate goal for any university course; universities are not political organizations.” (personal communication, March 12, 2008). This statement, imbedded in a sea of words, were the key to unlocking why and how a course I proposed was experiencing unexpected resistance from an approval committee. It was an Honors Program course on dominant privilege in the United States, and had, upon first review, appeared to be sailing through the process. The questions from the review committee were limited “usual suspects”—“clarify here, add a bit there.” Revisions were made quickly and easily, and a few weeks later, I received a lengthy response from the committee, now expressing grave concerns about the course. One member’s feedback was included verbatim (but without the member’s name), and included the preceding quote.

Confused, I reviewed the public vitas of Committee members. One member included a link to a personal web page, which included links to Rush Limbaugh, Laura Ingraham, and Ann Coulter. It also included links to the National Association of Scholars (NAS) and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). NAS includes “watchlists” of university programs perceived as having liberal agendas (their Argus project), and FIRE has a long history of targeting college programs that support inclusivity and reject hate speech.

Privileged perspectives as normal and neutral. What is privileged in colleges and universities and perceptions of what is neutral were likely at the heart of the comment of the committee member, as well as in the beliefs of NAS, FIRE, and similar organizations. What in curriculum is privileged? What is considered normative? Examining patterns provides insight into these questions. Attacks on curricula are not new. Horowitz (2004, 2006) argued over a decade ago that conservative perspectives were being silenced in favor of liberalism on college campuses; using labels of “conservative” and “liberal” belied the complexity of issues and

existence of levels of privilege, racism, and marginalization. In 2007, entire issues of the *Journal of Teacher Education* (Volume 58, Issue 5) and the *Journal of Educational Controversy* (Volume 2, Issue 2) were devoted to a controversy surrounding the removal of the term “social justice” from the primary education accreditation organization.

More recently, the organization Turning Point USA has adapted the strategies of FIRE, creating a “watch list” of over 200 college and university professors viewed as having liberal agendas. There are Turning Point chapters on many college campuses. On their website, they describe themselves as follows:

Turning Point USA is a 24/7-365 activist organization. Our staff and students travel to campuses in all 50 states to identify young conservatives, connect them with local chapters and resources, advertise conservative values, engage in face-to-face and peer-to-peer conversations about the pressing issues facing our country (Turning Point USA, 2016, para. 2).

Potential bias in committee structures. In colleges and universities, privilege can be protected by committee structures and decision making that lack transparency and accountability. Decisions about curricula, internal grants, and many other faculty initiatives are made behind closed doors, generally with limited feedback provided. The case of the dominant privilege course was an exception; in most cases, reviewers do not so explicitly post their political leanings on their websites.

The malevolence of benevolence to privilege. It was apparent through the written feedback to me that the person who indicated that he would not support the proposal was an outlier, but the other committee members did not substantively challenge him. The written feedback to me stated:

In the end, the committee tabled the proposal again and instructed me [the Honors staff person] to ask for ‘substantial’ revisions. They asked me to stress, though, that they do support the course as being offered in Honors — as one member put it, ‘this course needs to be taught’—and they hope that you’re willing to undertake the revisions (personal communication, March 12, 2008).

The preceding statement reflects a classic disconnect between “What do you stand for?” and “Who do you stand with?” The burden of identifying and responding to the faulty assumptions of the outlier shifted from the committee to me. Although the reason for the committee not taking responsibility is unknown, it likely reflected a desire to keep goodwill on the committee, coupled with a lack of authenticity in care about the dominant privilege course approval. What is known is that Committee members did not take a strong internal stand, therefore risking nonapproval of the course that they said “needs to be taught.” In committee structures, there are many places to hide, which is a structural barrier that impacts curriculum in many ways. My 3600-word response to the committee was carefully constructed to respond to the ersatz and politically-motivated challenges. It yielded swift approval of the dominant privilege course.

Anti-Activism as Moral High Ground

“I am ethically opposed to putting our students at risk of being fired by talking about activism. We should be teaching our students to be compliant, not activists.”

“I will support this proposal only if the word ‘activism’ is replaced by ‘advocacy.’”

“What are your credential to teach this course? Have you ever been a Principal? A Superintendent?” (Department faculty, personal communication, April 22, 2015)

A public departmental discussion of a proposed course entitled “Educators as Activists” included the preceding three comments, each from a different faculty member. Explicit in each comment was perceptions of the professional responsibility to protect teacher education students at a public Predominantly White Institution (PWI) from the consequences of activism. Each comment represented a common and damaging stance based on narrow and unexamined assumptions and stereotypes. And, although each of the three people’s discussions included some iteration of “I am for equity and social justice (“What do I stand for?”), the arguments clearly did not “stand with” activism.

Activism as dangerous. The premise of an unethical nature of teaching activism created a false “for students” and “against students” dichotomy. Anyone supporting the course would, under the logic of the premise, be against the best interests of students. The idea of activism as dangerous reflects both a stereotypical view of activism and a paternalistic view of education that suggests that students shouldn’t be given information and are unable to process and apply what they learn in making informed decisions.

Activism as too radical. Promoting an “activism lite” compromise of “advocacy” trivializes the meaning and impact of activism movements and the serious, intentional work that is and has historically been part of them. While distinctions between advocacy and activism are appropriate to explore and were included in the course materials presented to faculty, that exploration was disregarded in favor of stereotypes and previously held beliefs.

Activism as appropriate for a selected few. Publically questioning the qualifications of a colleague to teach a course was unprecedented in the department, and reflected both a sense of entitlement and a narrow understanding of activism. The related comment suggesting that being a school administrator was somehow prerequisite to teaching an activism course was both bewildering and arcane.

Activism as unnecessary. Inherent in all three comments—activism as dangerous, too radical, and only appropriate for some—was a trivialization of the work of activists and the issues they address. Suggesting that future teachers should not be exposed to activism denies the realities of the many equity and social justice issues impacting students, their families, and their communities. The majority of faculty members agreed. When the vote was taken, the course was approved, 16 in favor and three against the proposal.

Strategies for Moving from Chasm to Convergence

Moving from chasm to convergence calls for not only learning about challenges within academic activism that create the chasm, but acting on that learning to move toward convergence. The perspectives presented in this writing from the views of academic activists, the need for academic activism to support student learning, and the barriers that exist for academic activists within the political and disciplinary contexts of colleges and universities include challenges and benefits to academic activism. The perspectives evoke a variety of strategies that can be used for personal and collective academic activism, including the following.

Use who you are, what you know, and what you do. Academics know their disciplines and the challenges within them, and are situated with depth of knowledge to create and use strategies for activism that are contextually appropriate to their fields and institutions.

Be vigilant about the necessary details that need to be known to disrupt institutional higher education barriers. Be the mind watching itself and others. Barriers are often hidden (or are in

plain sight) behind long-standing institutional practices. Work to ask the questions to expose them. When barriers are counter to stated university goals, use those goals to center questions and disruption. Use privilege as an organizing concept to consider who benefits and who doesn't benefit from decisions and policies within the institution.

Apply your voice (written and oral), both in your institution and in your discipline, to move academic activism from liminality to centrality. If you are in a field where activism is already central and part of the scholarship and pedagogy, consider developing interdisciplinary relationships to broaden the impact of your disciplinary knowledge base on activism. Academic activism as a focus of your scholarship can contribute to creating theoretical or conceptual frameworks in academic activism.

Build a support network of other academic activists to thwart feelings of isolation. Others are out there. Collaborate. Write together. Learn together. Within your institution, consider opportunities for faculty learning communities. Beyond your institution, explore connections in national and international interdisciplinary networks, such as the International Network of Scholar Activists (INOSA).

Work to support activism as a conceptual framework for student intellectualism, both in your existing courses and in your departmental curriculum. Engage students in thinking about themselves as activists through their intellectual work and in community engagement.

Learn to recognize outlier perspectives that focus on maintaining privilege or taking an anti-activism stance so that they have less impact in derailing or deflecting discussions and positive action. Consensus is great when it can happen, but time and energy devoted to outliers limits authentic, productive conversation.

Finally, take a breath. Articulate your own view of your academic activism. Who you are can only be defined by you. Your expertise, experiences, and passions are unique. If you choose to be an academic activist, then you *are an academic activist*.

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Feminist Scholar-Activism Goes Global: Experiences of “Sociologists for Women in Society” at the UN

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Abstract

This article focuses on the experiences and strategies of members of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) who strive to bridge the worlds of social activism and academia. It concerns the International Committee’s work at the United Nations (UN), specifically at the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting. It builds on transnational feminist literature that has discussed the UN as stage for a diverse global women’s movement and provider of global gender equality norms that, if utilized, advance gender equality in its member states. I analyze themes that emerged from a sample of in-depth interviews with current or former UN scholar-activists within SWS from a larger ethnographic study, and present experiences and challenges of SWS members’ engagement with UN politics and policy development since the mid-nineties. I demonstrate that SWS does justice to its mission of serving as an activist organization through its work in the global arena. Analysis of interviews, observations, and archival material demonstrates that SWS’s UN scholar-activism is increasing the visibility and applicability of feminist sociology. While this activism critically examines the discourse, it also disrupts hegemonic discourse and offers opportunities for concrete social change, particularly through linking activism, mentoring, and teaching.

Keywords: United Nations, Feminist Sociology, Global Feminism, Transnational Scholar-activism

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We talk all the time how do we blend the academy with activism, well there it is, the UN. That to me is the perfect blend. We are using our research knowledge, our academic background to promote women's equality... We don't only have the potential of having an impact on an issue in the US; we have the potential of having an impact on an issue worldwide.

Former UN delegate for SWS (I 16)

Finding the “perfect blend” in work as described in the introductory quote, and advocating for social justice through action is the goal of many academics. It is inherent in a feminist approach to scholarly and educational work, which evolved out of its commitment to social change. Apart from scholar-activism on an individual level, the question arises if and how scholarly *organizations* can serve as an arena for global social change. (How) Can sociological networks address gender-related social problems on a global scale and utilize global governance structures such as the United Nations (UN) to shape gender equality discourse? This article takes Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) as an example to tackle these questions, and interrogates opportunities and limitations for feminist scholar-activism around the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

The CSW in the UN is one of the oldest commissions of the UN, dedicated to the advancement and monitoring of gender equality among its currently 193 member states. Particularly in the last four decades, the UN has created important physical and virtual space for the evolution of a “global gender equality regime” (Kardam, 2004) that blossomed around the UN Women World Conferences since 1975 and that offers a vibrant platform for transnational social movements addressing gender and sexuality (Desai, 2005, 2009; Jain, 2005; United Nations, 2000). Around the annual meeting of the intergovernmental body of the CSW in the UN Headquarters in New York City a lively arena for agency has evolved that allows for transnational gender and sexuality rights advocates to network in parallel events and to attempt to shape the global gender equality agenda.

This article builds on transnational feminist literature that has discussed the UN as stage for a diverse global women’s movement and provider of global gender equality norms that, if utilized, advance gender equality in its member states. SWS as an organization seeks to shape these norms. I first contextualize SWS’ scholar-activism within the broader literature on transnational feminist theory and establish the organization as a pertinent case study for scholar-activism. I then briefly examine my methodology and unpack the history of SWS’ scholar-activism in and around the UN based on historic documents and publications. I then turn to the research site CSW and lay out themes that emerged from sub-sample of interviews with current or former SWS scholar-activists, representing experiences and challenges of SWS members’ engagement with UN policy development since the mid-nineties. I demonstrate that SWS does justice to its mission of serving as an activist organization through its work in the global arena. The activism of SWS-members increases visibility of feminist sociology, disrupts hegemonic discourse and offers opportunities for concrete social change, particularly through linking activism, mentoring, and teaching.

Theorizing a “Global” Women’s Movement? Some Tensions and Constraints

In order to conceptualize SWS as a *global* actor of scholar-activism, as well as part of the *transnational* women’s movement, it is necessary to briefly delve into some theoretical considerations about these terms as derived from transnational feminist theory. For the last

two centuries, women have organized themselves in networks beyond the nation-state and have forged international and transnational ties (Hawkesworth, 2012; Rupp, 1997). In the 20th century, the UN has been an “unlikely godmother” (Snyder, 2006) of a “global women’s movement” (Antrobus, 2004). That usually refers to women’s mobilization of the past four decades around the UN’s International Women’s Decade, 1975-1985, and the series of UN world conferences in the 1990s around human rights, the environment, population, and social development, among others. Yet the term is problematic and highly contested (Desai, 2007b; Grewal, 1998). Feminists have criticized the notion of a “global women’s movement” because women’s voices are lumped together and sold as an artificial unified voice (Bergeron, 2001; Desai, 2002; Ferree & Tripp, 2006), and a flawed dichotomy of local/global is substantiated (Patil, 2011).

Interrogating “Global Feminism”

Initially, the notion of “global feminism” was critical of the earlier notion of “global sisterhood” and its uncritical attachment to commonalities of women’s oppression around the world (Mohanty, 1991, 2003). Chowdhury (2006) argues that global feminism uses a universal human rights paradigm, and thus constructs for itself the role of the heroic, imperial savior, reminiscent of colonialist civilizing missions (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Chowdhury (2006) suggests that we need to simultaneously undo race and nation, and interrogate not only international but also intra-national (within the U.S.) hierarchies to forge global gender equality. Walby (2011) makes the point that the UN is a global phenomenon. She thus uses “global feminism” when, and only when, she talks about organizations that utilize the UN or one of its bodies as context for activism. Along these lines, I argue that SWS is indeed part of a global women’s movement as it actively engages with the UN, the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women.

Critical Transnational Feminist Perspectives

In response to the concept of global feminisms, critical transnational feminist perspectives emerged in the 1990s (Desai, 2015; Patil, 2011). Transnational feminist perspectives question a northern “missionary liberal feminism” (Hawkesworth, 2006) and address issues of imperialism, colonialism and development, while seeking out intersectional approaches to methodology and theory development (Falcón, 2016b). Transnational feminist perspectives have successfully questioned the constructions of women of the global South as “the other,” and elaborated on neo-colonial legacies and politico-economic inequalities (Falcón, 2016a).

SWS and Self-Criticality

The research of some members of SWS continues to self-critically point out human rights violations in the US (Armaline, Glasberg, & Purkayastha, 2011), instead of pointing fingers to developing countries. Patil (2011) and Desai (2015) identify two canonical texts that have shaped transnational feminist theory: Alexander and Mohanty (1997) and Grewal and Kaplan (1994). Patil (2011) summarizes three key positions within feminist sociology in response to them: 1) moving beyond dichotomies of local versus global, bringing together gender and sexuality within post-colonial nationalism and state-building projects (Kim-Puri, 2005); 2) an emphasis on women’s agency and transnational organizing, building particularly via

international organizations (Desai, 2009; Naples & Desai, 2002); and 3) a focus on transnational networks and opportunity structures (Ferree, 2006; Moghadam, 2005). Most of this work, as well as the articles in a notable 2005 *Gender & Society* special issue on state and nation from a transnational feminist perspective (Kim-Puri, 2005) outline a transnational feminist perspective as theoretically interdisciplinary and as a political and activist project, emphasizing the interconnections between activism and academia.

SWS as a Bridge between the Academe and Activism

SWS is a pertinent case to consider the bridge between academia and activism. It is an association of feminist sociologists from across the nation (and to a lesser extent the world). It was founded in 1970 as an activist organization with the goal to change sociology, yet it is also an academic organization. While SWS is concerned with the status of women in society, as reflected in its name, it started off as an organization that aimed to give women sociologists a platform for career development and support (Feltey & Rushing, 1998; SWS, 2013). It has evolved into an organization that continues these endeavors and has embraced engagement with transnational feminism from the start. SWS is a US-centric organization: It had 884 members as of October 2016, of which more than 95% are located in the United States (SWS, 2017). More than half of the members are on the SWS email listserv that serves as primary networking, information and support tool throughout the year (SWS, 2015).

SWS maintains a social action committee and understands itself as an activist feminist organization that is committed to social change *for* women in society. SWS facilitates activism through the email listserv, supporting local chapters in the US, media training for members, providing access to current research, e.g. fact sheets, and networking with other organizations and promoting members as experts in their research areas (Feltey and Rushing 1998, see also the website of SWS <http://www.socwomen.org>). Its members have contributed to campaigns and protests. They also have founded non-profit organizations, and served on boards of activist organizations (Feltey & Rushing, 1998; Risman, 2006).

Methods

Entrance and Multiple Roles in the Field

I had been member of the International Committee of SWS since the onset of graduate school in 2007. I served as official UN delegate for SWS from 2009-2012 in the US; since 2015 I have served as SWS delegate to the CSW NGO Forum in Vienna, Austria. Accordingly, one aspect of my identity in the field is being an NGO-representative and scholar-activist. This role facilitates my access to the field sites through an official UN grounds pass. As a researcher I also collect data systematically during UN-related activities. In these blended roles I accompanied a UN field trip for students to CSW 53 as teaching assistant (Swider & Jauk, 2009), and observed the CSW 55 meeting in 2011, and the CSW 56 meeting in 2012.

In 2010, I was able to pursue a two-month internship in the fall of 2010 in the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW, now UN Women). These are open to graduate students of all disciplines. I secured an IRB approval from the University of Akron for what was now to become my dissertation project and used my 10-week internship for in-depth ethnographic

participant observation and informal field conversations documented by extensive field notes, documents, images, recorded events and memos from the rooms of the UN headquarters in New York City. I immediately made transparent my activist background and my interest in pursuing a dissertation project about the CSW towards my UN supervisor and my UN colleagues, with some of whom I recorded interviews. I have discussed my shifting and coexisting roles as insider and outsider in the field more extensively elsewhere (Jauk, 2014). The internship was the onset of my dissertation project, employing descriptive exploratory qualitative methodology.

Data Collection

During all the CSW meetings and my internship at the UN headquarters in New York City I filled numerous research diaries, and typed out extensive fieldnotes most every evening during my field research drawing on field jottings and extensive photographic documentation. For my dissertation I additionally recorded, transcribed and analyzed 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with UN staff members involved in the organizational logistics of the CSW, diplomats, country delegates, and gender activists working in and around the CSW. In Appendix B: Table 1, I provide an overview chart of data collection with timeline.

In this paper I primarily draw on a sub-sample of 11 interviews conducted with former or present SWS members who are, or have been, instrumental in SWS' work at the UN. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and via skype in the summer of 2012, transcribed verbatim and analyzed utilizing the software AtlasTI. I have de-identified and numbered the interviews (I1-I20). I identify who is talking when I quote verbatim in this paper with the numeric identifier and professional background if appropriate. Two of the participants were women who were instrumental in the process of getting consultative status for SWS in the late 1990s. Eight of the interviewed SWS members have at some point been elected as UN delegates. Four of the participants have been active in global feminist contexts beyond the UN. I supplement interview narratives with observation data, as well as systematic content analysis of SWS *Network News* articles (online on the SWS website since 2004; earlier relevant issues were kindly provided by Judith Lorber) as well as meeting minutes, documents, and letters that were forwarded to me by the SWS Executive Office and other SWS members. The content analysis helped me to identify a time line of the development and professionalization of the international work of SWS.

Data Analysis

I adopted constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) as analytical strategy. Data was first coded in an open coding process, followed by several rounds of focused coding. Data analysis alternated with, as well as guided further data collection. For example, "SWS as activist organization" emerged as a theme only in 2011 when I worked as UN delegate for SWS. I wanted to find out about those women who served before me and made it possible for SWS to have access to the UN. I situate myself as feminist sociologist, with the understanding that there is no single feminist methodology, and no one correct feminist method, but "multiple feminist lenses" (Hesse-Biber, 2007a, p. 4). I used my own white,

western, working class, transnational feminist lens to examine the interview transcripts of feminist scholar-activists.

Research Trajectories and Decisions

I started with the impetus to write a “herstory” of SWS' UN work and honor the “founding mothers” and instrumental activists over the years who have advanced SWS' activism in the global realm. As in all social research, data collection and analysis involves exclusion processes of those who could not or would not participate in the project. I agree with the participant who said, “What’s really amazing about the SWS and the international committee itself is that it isn’t just a few names, most of the people involved participate in that nurturing culture and if you don’t come in with it you learn it.” I have thus decided to focus on patterns not persons in this paper. For reasons of confidentiality I have de-identified direct quotes of participants. I use names in historical contexts when they appeared in a minimum of three different transcripts, which indicated to me that the scholar-activists are inter-subjectively established as leaders in a certain historical role by the subsample in my investigation. I turn now to the themes that emerged from this analysis.

Findings

Historical Background: Inception and Development of International Work within SWS

“Talking to SWS about public sociology is like bringing coal to Newcastle” stated Michael Burawoy (2002, p. 1) in an address to the SWS constituency, referring to the activist agenda and working methods SWS strives to embrace as an organization. Many SWS members engage in public sociology, so much so that they are not only active as public sociologists in the US despite institutional barriers (Sprague & Laube, 2009) but have moved into the international and global realm as an arena of social activism (Desai, 2007c). Since its beginnings, some SWS members participated in transnational feminist networks. Some facilitated participation of SWS members in the series of UN Women’s Worlds Conferences, the World Social Forum, and many other outlets for transnational and global women’s movements. Two SWS members currently serve as representatives to the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the UN. The DPI’s function is to promote global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the United Nations. Currently, some 1500 NGOs are associated with the DPI (2016). The arena of the CSW became accessible because SWS was granted Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 1999. Five persons permanently serve as delegates to ECOSOC, yet most years as many as 20 SWS members and their students attend the CSW meetings.

The history of SWS’ involvement at the UN is interwoven with the New York Chapter of SWS. Also called the “Metropolitan Chapter,” it had been in existence since the beginnings of SWS in the 1970’s, and was a vibrant community of at times up to 25 women who came from around New York to monthly meetings, usually at a member’s home (Wartenberg, 1995). The meetings featured lectures, research presentations, book reviews, or guest speakers. According to one participant the chapter “died a kind of graceful death” and disbanded around 2006 because “most of the members were getting older, retired, and tired” (I12). The spark for organized international scholar-activism within SWS came from New

York members H. Hacker and A. Myers after they attended the UN Conference on Women in 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya. At the same time, J. Gordon became a UN representative for another organization in 1986.

By the mid 1990's international work had begun to take place within SWS systematically but on an informal basis. Some SWS members had been working with the UN as individuals, as representatives of other organizations, or even as SWS representatives, within the venue of the UN DPI by 1997/98. The 4th Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, for which J. Lorber organized SWS side events, sparked a wave of professionalization in SWS' international work. She had set up the International Committee of SWS as Ad Hoc Committee 1994 – against some resistance – to facilitate SWS' involvement with the Beijing Conference and to create a place and a process to organize SWS' presence on the global scene. She saw the need to formalize and bundle insular global scholar-activism of members. Several SWS members represented SWS at the Huairou Forum adjacent to the formal UN conference in Beijing (SWS, 1995).

One way to connect the scholarly world of members with UN related activism was and remains *Network News*, the newsletter of the organization. The newly established International Committee committed itself from the start to report back to the organization in review meetings and in the newsletter. SWS representatives to the UN were mandated “to speak and vote in caucuses but for written statements or formal oral statements, representatives must get approval of the membership” (Lorber as cited in *SWS Network News* 1994, p. 12). Members of the New York chapter were also instrumental in lifting SWS' status to the “highest status we can get” (Gordon as cited in *SWS Network News* 1996, xiii, 5, p. 7).

In order for an organization to participate fully in it has to achieve “Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN” as a non-governmental organization (NGO), short: ECOSOC status. Eastwood (2006, p. 189) coined the term “intentional institutional capture” to denote processes by which practitioners translate their experiences and interests into something that is recognizable by the organization. Through achieving ECOSOC status SWS' experiences become recognizable to the UN and scholar-activism can take effective shape.

Formal Accreditation of SWS at the United Nations

The application for ECOSOC status was started by New York chapter members E. Wolfson and completed with the help of I. Arafat, J. Skiles, and J. Gordon. D. Papademas agreed to serve as one of the first delegates, along with J. Gordon and J. Skiles. The “UN sub-committee” had many, fluctuating members over the years, but according to one early participant, “we did not have an agenda.” Some continuity was established through long-term members J. Skiles, D. Papademas, H. Raisz, R. Gallin, J. Gordon, J. Lorber, T. Smith, and M. Desai who are mentioned in the narratives and in documents as the biggest bearers of UN-knowledge. In recent years S. Lee, P. Ould and B. Katuna started to create manuals and literature on SWS' UN work to increase the visibility within SWS and the content of actual scholar-activism around the UN. Increasing UN visibility within the organization is essential, e.g. in order to keep and increase (travel) funding for UN delegates, and to effectively communicate and create the bridge between scholarship and activism in the global arena.

M. Desai was the first chair to divide the IC into three subcommittees: one consisting of scholar-activists around the UN, one consisting of scholars within the International Sociological Association (ISA), in particular the Research Committee 32, and thirdly, she initiated the Global Feminist Partnership program. This step expanded scholar-activism further by connecting SWS with overseas research centers and allowed for the development of context-specific expertise. UN scholar-activism underwent another surge of professionalization: The IC redefined the role of SWS in the UN and introduced staggered 3-year terms for delegates, in order for more experienced delegates to mentor new members (Desai, Fall 2005 IC report), a practice that has been honored and further developed by T. Smith (2007; 2008), M. Karides (2009), and M. Kim (2012) in their functions as IC chairs. It wasn't until 2011 that the IC had more applicants to serve as UN delegates than positions to be filled, "but before that, it was trying to find if anyone was willing to do this" states a former IC chair (I19). As SWS UN delegates have improved their internal communication in *Network News* and their operating structures over the years, UN work has become more attractive to SWS members, junior scholars as well as graduate students. The interest is perspicuous considering the perceived benefits of UN work to which I now turn.

The CSW: A Site for Feminist Scholar-Activism

The site for SWS' feminist scholar-activism under consideration here is the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It fostered its place in the UN system through the four World Women's Conferences (Reanda, 1999; Winslow, 1995). The members of the CSW convene annually in the UN Headquarters in New York for ten working days in late February, early March. CSW meetings involve delegates of member states of the UN, representatives of the UN-system, invited academic experts, and grassroots organizations which hold "parallel events" during the CSW meeting and utilize the convention to lobby delegates (for a detailed account how the CSW works see Jauk, 2012). In 2016 the NGO CSW committee which organizes this parallel conference on site received 550 applications for parallel events, of which 450 events were held in a 10 day period (NGO CSW 2016).

Since 1996 the outcome of the annual meetings is a document called "Agreed Conclusions" on one or more priority themes. It constitutes policy guidelines for all member states that are crafted in formal and informal meetings (For a history of the CSW see United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996 and United Nations 2006). In the core of the CSW are the negotiations of the member states that take place mostly behind closed doors. Delegates from all countries negotiate paragraph by paragraph for the Agreed Conclusions. The facilitator of the meetings can allow NGOs to observe this process, and SWS delegates have taken advantage of this opportunity to "learn how the UN works, comma by comma, period by period" (I18). SWS delegates perceived the "watchdog" position as rewarding, and appreciated the chance to open this learning opportunity to students. This international stage enables a specific view also on one's country. One delegate remembered "people very politely listening to the delegates from Syria or other countries..., that ordinarily the United States doesn't want to talk to. But here we [*note of author*: i.e. the US] respect and are listening to the opinions of the women from all over world" (I20). The quote also demonstrates the experience of empowerment as feminist scholar-activist, as the setting opens communication channels with representatives from nation states.

Alive and Thriving: Global Feminist Scholar-Activism

SWS fulfills its role at the UN through participation at the meetings and in recent years through the submission of written statements to the CSW (see Appendix A for list of statements). It also organizes parallel events, which has increased the visibility of SWS at the UN and marks an improvement in intentional institutional capture. Parallel events are a way to bridge the scholar-activist divide and enter into intense exchange with other scholar-activists and policy makers. On March 5, 2012, M. Desai, S. Hamal Gurung and K. Kelly shared their research under the title “Feminist Sociological Insight on Literacy Projects, Community Grassroots Groups, and Rural Women's Leadership.” I noted in my field notes that

About 70 women (and some men) are crammed into the small stuffy presentation room in the Church Center, some had to stand, and some were sitting on the floor at points, because there were no free chairs. Right after the presentation eight women are lining up at the front desk of the SWS panelists, six of them hold paper and pen in their hands to note contact details, most others are rushing out of the room to other sessions in the tight parallel event schedule. (Excerpt from Fieldnotes March 5th 2012)

Several attendees stated that they were attracted by the word “feminist” in the title of the session, a word not common at the CSW (Jauk et al., 2012). Further SWS parallel events at the CSW took place on March 15, 2013 (“Feminist Responses to Violence Against Women and Girls”); March 19, 2015 (“Feminist Sociological Perspectives: Gender-Based Violence and the Continued Struggle for Equality in a Post 2015 Agenda”), and March 22, 2016 (“Feminist Sociological Research & Economic Sustainability: Local, National, and Global Insights.”).

In recent years impact and visibility of UN work increased through the documentation of processes (most credited in this regard are the IC chairs M. Desai, M., M. Kim, and S. Lee) and the written statement (most credited activists are S. Lee and B. Katuna). The written statement is a formal 1500-word document that will be translated into the five UN languages and published with the official documentation of the CSW meeting on the UN website. Based on SWS scholarship and UN-reports (i.e. “agreed language”) the statements are manifest outlets of feminist scholar-activism. They internally served as common denominators for SWS’ lobby-work in the different action-arenas of briefings, caucuses, and interactions with country delegates and UN-system members. The written statement gains impact only through actual communication and lobbying work, as this SWS delegate explains:

It was very satisfying to me, the year that the priority goal was women's education we had submitted a paper about education, ...[.]...I didn't get to ask the question at the briefing but at the end of briefing I went up to the delegate I told her I was from SWS and I gave her a copy of the paper and I talked to her about the language and I gave her that slip of paper. She said, “I absolutely agree with you that language is missing, it needs to be in there.” And when the document came out the language was there. And that to me it was so satisfying to feel like “Wow, I had some role in doing that!” (I16)

“Transformative,” “thrilling,” “exciting,” “inspiring,” “exhilarating” are the words used to describe SWS delegate’s work and activism around the UN. It is personal inspiration,

connecting with other women from around the globe, and the embodied experience of the learning that SWS UN delegates mention most often in their narratives as payoffs of their work. Some see synergies between the UN and SWS that coincide with goals and methods of feminist scholar-activists: “Maybe [it is] because we're academic but there's an attraction to institutionalized forums like this,” as one scholar-activist speculates why the bureaucratic mire of the UN even evokes positive emotions in some. The UN context as symbolic to overcome social, cultural, and geographical boundaries and the embodied experience of collective action was stressed in other narratives.

Alive and Learning: Education Through Transnational Feminist Connections

Making connections to other women was by far the benefit most emphasized by SWS delegates. A sense of empowerment, solidarity and hope is expressed in every narrative of my sample. The connections made with women are also shared with students. CSW involvement does not only impact one's research but also quality and opportunities in teaching. One senior faculty member and former UN delegate observed:

I have made some connections...I've met some of the women from some of the African NGOs are just remarkable...I have gone to some of the side events and just really had a great experience...I connected some of my students with some of these NGOs because part of their project was to find an NGO that was working on an issue that they had identified for the country they were studying. I was able to connect them directly with the people in the organization. (I16)

There is particular benefit of SWS scholar-activism for graduate students. Several graduate students have utilized SWS' global activism for their dissertation research (Jauk, 2013; Smith, 2008). Students can connect with senior scholars through common activism. It is a way to “make [your] name recognizable” (I15) as a student notes, and an opportunity to collaborate without pressure to publish. While early delegates identify as “self-taught global activists” (I10) and “made the road by walking (I18);” later generations benefitted from intergenerational mentoring. A delegate of the first years says: “I think because I am one of the first UN reps, we were all learning together. Most of my colleagues were senior, but in terms of work with the UN we were all kinda learning together (I15).” Later more *Network News* articles were available, and S. Lee created a working document with the title “Lessons Learned” that was passed on to newer delegates and explained the CSW in nontechnical language, as well as how to get around. One delegate explains her initial reactions and her experience of mentoring within SWS:

I just remember feeling so overwhelmed and so scared like I should turn around and run ...There was this sharing of knowledge and I feel that it is really important that they don't make you feel stupid...the whole process of being a UN rep really relied on that passive knowledge of one generation of women to the next. (I10)

It is clear in the narrative that intergenerational mentoring was crucial for this SWS scholar-activist to stay and grow in UN involvement. Yet there are also challenges to scholar-activism around the UN to which I now turn.

Challenges of SWS' Global Feminist Public Sociology at the UN

Effective global activism in the realm of the UN is “a question of reconnaissance, somebody has to have the time to ferret out the place where SWS can make a mark, a small one but a significant one and build from there but it does take personnel, the time, and some funding (I18);” says a former IC chair. Along these lines constraints of time and money have defined SWS scholar-activism. This finding is consistent with research on scholar-activism more generally (Hale, 2008; Sprague & Laube, 2009), and marks a significant difference to other NGOs around the UN. Historically, SWS scholars in the NYC area attended UN meetings because they have “deluxe access” (I17) to the UN due to their geographical proximity to the UN Headquarters. SWS UN delegates are “volunteer representatives” (I17) and different from full-time paid activists of better-resourced NGOs. According to one SWS delegate “there are a lot of people involved as NGOs at the UN, who are just wealthy women who find this an interesting thing to do and they spend all their time there...It's hard when you're not funded to do it and you are trying to catch the attention of people in your spare time (I18).” Travel costs are an issue that needs to be addressed by the organization to ensure participation by scholar-activists across the nation.

The lack of funds in turn may illustrate privilege, as a delegate shares: “It made me more sympathetic to what third world women are going through because it takes a high level of top resource time and money to actually be able to go to these things” (I16). That also points to one of the major challenges discussed in SWS' literature and the narratives represented here: differences *between* women. A delegate speaks for several SWSers when she locates a “competition at the UN amongst groups as there are a couple of more powerful well established women's organizations who get picked as the lead organizations (I15).” This experience has also been translated into critical transnational feminist research (Desai, 2007a, 2007b; Naples & Desai, 2002).

Investing time and personal funds into SWS activism often means divesting resources from other professional activities that are valued in the academic reward system. Some participants shared that their departments were not particularly supportive of SWS in general, much less so of UN work. For some this was the reason they could not continue their role as UN delegates. In their research on feminist public sociology, Sprague and Laube (2009) asked a larger sample of SWS members for the institutional arrangements that make doing public sociology difficult. They found two related institutional barriers: the culture of professional sociology and the standards used for evaluating scholarship. Formal evaluation practices place significant emphasis on the prestige of the publication outlet and quantity of publications. Public sociology takes time, resulting in fewer publications.

Along these lines some UN delegates' work is made possible by institutional support from their departments for the benefit of SWS and future generations of scholar-activists. One delegate explains:

I think part of the problem in doing the international work...is getting people who are interested in it and willing to give the time. Part of difference that I make is that I was willing to do that. Now in a way I probably wasn't producing as many publications as I might have done. It took away from some of the other professional work that I might have been doing. I am not in a department that really puts a lot of pressure on me to publish, publish, publish. They like the idea that I was involved in the UN. But it did take a lot of time. I was always amazed by how much time it took. (I14)

Another dimension of institutional support is the support within SWS, which some members perceive as suboptimal. In recent years SWS dedicated some funds to the IC which are spent towards the parallel event as well as partial reimbursements for UN delegates.

A further challenge is the high turnover not only among SWS delegates but also within the UN system. D. Papademas as well as J. Skiles were able to meet with the director of DAW (Division for the Advancement of Women) on different occasions, and other SWS delegates confirmed that SWS was “recognized” in its scholar-activist beginnings in the UN. A high turnover among UN staff and a relatively young retirement age (at 60) made it difficult to maintain professional relationships. Also, predominantly lower level staff is designated to deal with the NGOs around the CSW meetings. Another delegate shares that she was successful in approaching actual U.S. country delegates, yet remained unconvinced about the level of influence they may have on actual proceedings after the conversation: “The man was nice, but he was kind of just sitting at the desk, to make sure there was a U.S. person at the desk. I do not think he had too much influence in U.S. policy.” (I14). During my UN internship I observed that often interns are being sent to CSW meetings “just to have a body in the chair” as an employee from a European Mission stated, speaking to the lower value attached to gender topics as well as a strategic evasion of conversations with NGOs.

Scholarship by SWS members has significantly shaped our understanding of gender as a plural and fluid category over the last decades. One challenge thus is that the UN operates with a binary gender system that has become too narrow for most feminist sociologists. SWS has specifically tried to open up the gender understanding in its written statement of 2013 in that it addressed violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals as an issue to be taken seriously at the level of the CSW. The effort to include related language in the outcome document in this regard failed. The recurrent failure of intergovernmental bodies to recognize multiple genders and sexualities has been widely discussed in the literature (Bedford, 2010; Buss & Herman, 2003). Some SWS scholars thus suggest transgressing the limitations of the UN and investing in grassroots organizations and expanding to other forums such as the World Social Forum. One former UN delegate who now is involved in World Social Forum emphasizes the need to collaborate with more radical grassroots organizations questioning gender and to put “our money where our mouth is” (I19) as a “superrich” organization. Other SWS members have dedicated their research to the liberal and colonial bias of the UN (Falcon, 2016a, Patil, 2009), as well as the reproduction of a missionary white feminism that gets reproduced through the ways in which the UN conceives gender (Desai, 2007b).

SWS is marginalized in the UN system because it is an NGO vis-a-vis the power apparatus of nation states, but also because the size of its comparatively small constituency, and the lack of paid full time activists. The UN itself is male-centered and male-dominated. A 2010 report shows that the representation of women in the UN slightly increased from 38.4 per cent in 2007 to 39.9 per cent in 2009, but women comprise less than a third (28.4 per cent) of the three highest professional ranks (United Nations, 2010). Since its inception in 1945 there has never been a female Secretary General. Women-related units are underfunded and less respected within the UN system (Miller, Razavi, & United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1998; Sandler & Rao, 2012). SWS is part of what one SWS activist calls the “other” UN which is “the UN of volunteers, and the Civil Society movement people...we are there on a fuzzy marginalized voluntary basis. We do not have any formal

power in the UN” (I17). SWS in this light is only one “tiny little NGO” (I18). so “making a big mark is unrealistic” (I20).

As a professional association of feminist sociologists SWS is not pushing a narrow agenda. A majority of delegates suggest that SWS can make its limitation its strength and continue to influence UN language and processes instead on a *broad* range of issues through events and statements. Further ideas of UN scholar-activism are creation of thematic bibliographies, but also using UN publishing opportunities to lift SWS work into visibility among UN practitioners. Some delegates have recently joined and promoted cross cutting initiatives like “Toward a More Feminist UN” (ICRW 2017). Also, the involvement in UN events of SWS’ global research partner institutes has increased over the past years. This also involves funding for the partners to come to CSW meetings and present their work.

Conclusion

Building on the work of Feltey and Rushing (1998), who conceptualized SWS as an arena for social change, I explore feminist scholar-activism within SWS as a venue for agency in an age of globalization. I argued that as feminist scholars, activists, mentors, and teachers SWS members offer constructive critique in and around UN policy construction. The UN also provides a field for feminist scholar activists to provide education for various actors, but also to simulatenously extend and improve own educational environments through connections and transnational feminist networking.

First, activism at the UN increases visibility and applicability for feminist sociology. The UN is a public outlet for SWS scholars to present research through parallel events and in research briefs in the form of written statements to the CSW. Some SWS scholars work with the UN in their individual capacity as consultants and sociologists. At all of these occasions feminists scholars offer education for country delegates, UN staff members, fellow NGO activists and other stakeholders. As UN delegates, SWS members are increasing the visibility of SWS not only at the United Nations but also in the scholarly community. Participants shared that they have or are presenting their UN work in the context of SWS to other (international) sociology associations “to keep making SWS's work as visible as I can within our professional arena” (I 17).

Second, scholar-activists do not only identify disparities in the UN discourse but actively disrupt it. With the critical transnational feminist lens, the UN is a global construct in which states are reconfigured, as the diplomatic missions to the UN reproduce the imaginary dichotomy of monolithic nation states vis a vis a virtual global civil society. Yet members of SWS disrupt this discourse with scholarly work and with educational feminist interventions on site. Recognizing that the UN is a critical vehicle for transnational feminist organizing since the 1990s, there is also critical awareness of profound differences and hierarchies between women in terms of who can participate in UN meetings due to wealth, education, and geopolitical location (Desai, 2002, 2005, 2007a; Naples, 2002) and emerging methodological strategies to address this intersectional inequality (Falcón, 2016) and the hegemonic and colonial logic of development and human rights that has been purported by UN actors (Suárez-Krabbe, 2016).

Third, even though the gender equality regime (Kardam 2004) built around the UN is a set of primarily discursive and symbolic commitments made by governments with very little actual commitment of resources, women’s movements have used these symbolic

commitments to achieve victories at local levels (Desai, 2007b). “The larger question is whether society has changed as a result of the work of SWS,” ask Feltey and Rushing (1998: 224). They conclude that the fact that SWS has practiced a combination of liberal politics (professional advancement) alongside an active radical political agenda has kept SWS viable over time, but it is questionable how the power gained within the academy can be translated into actual social change. SWS scholar activists lead the way in showing how to utilize international agreements locally, for example by urging to move forward the ratification of CEDAW (Lee, 2010). UN involvement also internationalized research agendas of members (Bose 2006).

Last but not least, it is the multidimensional implications of the the UN as a tool and target for education that make it interesting for scholar activists of various backgrounds. As the narratives show, being a feminist scholar-activist in the context of the UN creates opportunities for one’s own education, as well as for one’s teaching and mentoring practice as it opens up a space of international networks and contacts in the NGO arena as well as to political and intergovernmental stakeholders. It is possible in this space to promote one’s research but also to connect students to different lifeworlds and sometimes also to concrete internships and research sites. Another important facet of this work is of course the opportunities to educate through research based events, particularly in the framework of parallel events around the CSW but also as potential speakers and panelists for preparatory expert groups.

Sprague and Laube (2009) believe that “sociology as a discipline has an ethical obligation to engage in public sociology (We have and will continue to develop knowledge that could help improve the lives of others and remedy serious social ills)” (p. 267). Besides this ethical obligation there are manifold personal and potentially professional benefits in bridging scholar-activism barriers, as the narratives of SWS members show. A feeling of accomplishment outside academia can be achieved. Bonding across barriers of location, ethnicity and geopolitics is possible and inspires research as well as teaching. The narratives and examples clearly show that scholar-activism holds benefit for scholarship, teaching and activism and that these realms often cannot be separated. This paper then is a call for a deeply feminist BOTH/AND approach to scholar-activism, an embracing to be and remain academic AND activist, advocating and teaching for equity, justice and action on many levels on a multidimensional feminist path to social justice.

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Appendix A: Important Notes

List of Abbreviations

CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DESA	Division for Economic and Social Affairs
DPI	Department of Public Information
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
IC	International Committee (of SWS)
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NGO CSW/NY	NGO Committee on the Status of Women (office New York City)
UN	United Nations
SWS	Sociologists for Women in Society

SWS statements submitted to the CSW

Statement submitted CSW 54/2010, E/CN.6/2010/NGO/31,
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/documentation.html>

Statement submitted CSW 55/2011, E/CN.6/2011/NGO/20,
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/documentation.htm>

Statement submitted CSW 56/2012, E/CN.6/2012/NGO/54,
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/documentation.htm>

Statement submitted CSW 57/2013, E/CN.6/2013/NGO/48
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2013/NGO/48

Statement submitted to CSW/58/2014, E/CN.6/2014/NGO/127
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2014/NGO/127

Statement submitted to CSW 59/2015, E/CN.6/2015/NGO/132
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2015/NGO/132

Statement submitted to CSW 60/2016, E/CN.6/2016/NGO/5
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2016/NGO/5

Statement submitted to CSW 61/2017, E/CN.6/2017/NGO/14
<http://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2017/NGO/14>

Appendix B: Table 1

Overview chart of data collection

Time	Data Collection	Type of data
03/2009	Observation of CSW 53 meeting in role as teaching assistant and SWS delegate	Images, research diary, report
10/2010 - 11/2010	Ethnographic fieldwork during internship in UN Headquarters	Field notes, documents and reports, images, research diary, recorded events and memos
03/2011	Participant Observation of CSW 55 meeting	
03/2012	Participant Observation of CSW 56 meeting	Full verbatim transcripts
10/2010 - 03/2012	Interviews with UN staff, diplomats, and country delegates, n=9	
03/2012 - 10/2012	Interviews with (former) UN delegates of SWS, n=11	Documents, newsletters, protocols
07/2012 - 10/2012	Archival SWS records	
Since 06/2016	Participant Observation of CSW NGO Forum in Vienna, Austria	Field notes, documents and reports, images, research diary, recorded events and memos

Title: Gendered Journeys: Women, Migration, and Feminist Psychology

Editors: Olivia M. Espin and Andrea L. Dottolo

Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan, New York City, New York

Year of Publication: 2015

Reviewed by: Ghazala Ahmed

In this book, Olivia Espin and Andrea Dottolo provided a gender analysis of voluntary and involuntary migration experiences of women from a psychological perspective, a topic that has been sidelined when exploring the experiences of migrant women. This book also adds to the literature by exploring gender and intersectionality through a feminist lens and different methodological approaches. Collectively 13 chapters are organized into 4 parts. In part 1, the authors presented general issues of immigrant women's lives in the host society which are influenced by home culture. In part 2, economic issues are addressed, followed by part 3 that focused on the issue of all forms of violence faced by immigrant women and refugee women. In the final part of the book, intergenerational impact of migration on women who are descendants of immigrants are explored.

Part I, "Place, Race, Memory and Migration" section, opens with chapter 1 by Olivia Espin on the importance of having memories of places, especially for immigrant women. Espin used the term "geography of memory" (p. 30) to explain how memories serve to construct a "sense of continuity in our lives" (p. 30). In other words, according to the author, language can be used by migrants as a therapeutic tool to encode and decode memories that are left behind in order to reshape their lives and to continue in a new place. In chapter 2, Suyemoto and Donovan used structural power analysis to examine power, privilege, and oppression associated with race and gender. The authors employed a feminist approach to reiterate the idea that "personal is political" (p. 55) and that "being vulnerable and exposed is one way to create change in ourselves and others" (p. 56). Suyemoto and Donovan acknowledged the use of personal experience as an approach to have a "deeper understanding and exploration of another's experiences" (p. 72).

Part II, "Work, Social Class and 'Traditional' Gender Roles," focused on issues of employment and family responsibilities that many immigrant women encounter. Pei-Wen Winnie Ma and Munyi Shea, in chapter 3, brought the challenges of "employment, motherhood, psychological health and related clinical implications" (p.83) to the forefront of migration discourse. The authors discussed how many immigrant women, professional and working class, must endure double burden by supporting the family financially and taking care of the family at the same time. For example, these working women are expected by their husbands to be fully responsible for the childcare and household work, despite working long hours. Using a feminist family therapy framework, Pei-Wen Winnie Ma and Munyi Shea concluded the chapter by pointing out that in order for feminist based therapy strategies to work, it is important to respect East Asian cultural values and traditional gender roles. In chapter 4, Sundari Balan and Ramaswami Mahaligam conducted an empirical study to investigate the stereotyping of Asian immigrant women being the good wife and a good worker "not only in relation to American women and men, but also to Asian men and fathers" (p. 105). Huma Ahmed Ghosh, in chapter 5,

looked at the migration experiences of Afghan mothers as refugees in relation to gender and class differences based on the wave of migration from Afghanistan to the United States. The authors also discussed the struggles of Muslim Afghan mothers and the challenges they encountered in raising children according to their religion and culture while settling in an “environment that is hostile to Muslims and Afghan” (p. 123).

Part III, “Violence, Resistance and Resilience,” addressed sexual, domestic, and political violence against women. Diya Kallivayalli, in chapter 6, discussed the politically motivated violence and provided a critique of the present political asylum system with regards to women who seek refuge after experiencing such atrocities. The chapter concluded with recommendations to clinicians working with the victims of politically motivated violence. In chapter 7, Tummala-Narra Satiani and Patel examined South Asian culture in the context of religion, spirituality, sexuality, and family structures. Using a feminist psychodynamic lens, the authors attempted to understand “social and contextual issues that contribute to the problem of sexual violence, the recovery process and empowerment within South Asian communities” (p. 167). Tummala- Narra Satiani and Patel shared their experiences as South Asian therapists and the role their culture, race, and gender played “in the therapeutic dyad” (p. 185). Quentero, Cerezo, Morales, and Gebhardt, in chapter 8, explored and analysed the factors that impacted the life of one transgender immigrant woman from Latin America to discuss the issue of transgendered women’s mental health needs. Using the ecological framework, the authors explored the impact of environmental factors, such as race, gender identity, ethnicity and sexual orientation—as well as the society’s perception of transgender and immigrant people—on the woman’s life. Quentero, Cerezo, Morales, and Gebhardt concluded this chapter by providing recommendations for mental health professionals about sociocultural factors that impact many transgendered immigrant women in the United States. In chapter 9, Serrata, Macias, Rosales, Rodriguez, and Perilla presented the study they conducted on Latina immigrant women who survived domestic violence in the Southeastern United States. The study documented the transformation process of Latina immigrant women by discovering inner strength and power to bring a change in the lives of other Latina immigrant women through the leadership program called “Lidres Comunitarias” (Community Leaders).

Part IV, “Intergenerational Impact of Migration” section, informs the readers about the serious impact of migration on several generations, especially “those who have not experienced the process of migrating themselves” (p. 228). In chapter 10, Stutman and Brady-Amoon focused on the undocumented Ecuadorian immigrants to the United States and their daughters who are US citizens. The authors examined lived experiences of the first generation Ecuadorian American girls growing up in the United States with the constant fear that their parents could be deported anytime if caught by the authorities. Stutman and Brady-Amoon call for future research to further explore the experiences of children of undocumented immigrant parents in order to have a deeper understanding of the psychological long term impact on daughters and sons. Sandra Mattar and Maria Teresa Pestana, in chapter 11, used their own personal narratives to address some aspects of intergenerational effects of migration on women in relation to race, gender, country of origin, language, and class. The authors concluded the chapter by arguing for the use of the intersectionality framework to understand the complexity of migration and acculturation experiences of each woman. Sandra Mattar and Maria Teresa Pestana also asserted the need to “particularize each immigrant’s story and the dangers resulting from theoretically generalizing the immigrant women experiences” (p. 266). Karen Kisiel Dion, in chapter 12, looked at the experiences of university undergraduate women born in Canada whose parents

arrived as immigrants. Dion argues: “Given the demands and pressures of gendered socialization within immigrant families across diverse ethnocultural communities, some young women may de-emphasize and/or redefine the role of their ethnocultural heritage in their self-definition” (p. 269). The author discussed the interviews of these young women and, based on their comments, proposed that young women’s self-definition approach “does not represent denial of one’s roots but may, in some circumstances, reflect an adaptive approach to constructing one’s identity” (p. 269). Moreover, Dion suggested that many young women in the study self-identified as bicultural, which may serve as a “form of empowerment at the psychological level” (p. 279). In chapter 13, Andrea Dottolo and Carol Dottolo explored the Italianness of granddaughters of first generation American Italian women in the United States and how these women used food—sharing recipes and preparing and eating Italian food—to construct and maintain their ethnic identity. According to the authors, “recipes also have a voice – of the person who wrote it and who made it, representing a connection to an individual family member” (p. 299).

I find this book a valuable resource for emerging researchers in developing the in-depth understandings of the gendered experiences of migration from various feminist theoretical and methodological perspectives. Although the recommendations in this book target social workers and mental health professionals, readers, such as educators and researchers in the postsecondary institutions, will benefit from the valuable insights and suggestions provided in this book to help adult learners cope with the experiences of migration and the psychological demand of being “betwixt and between neither here nor there” (p. 35).